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## INDIA: LAND OF REGRETS

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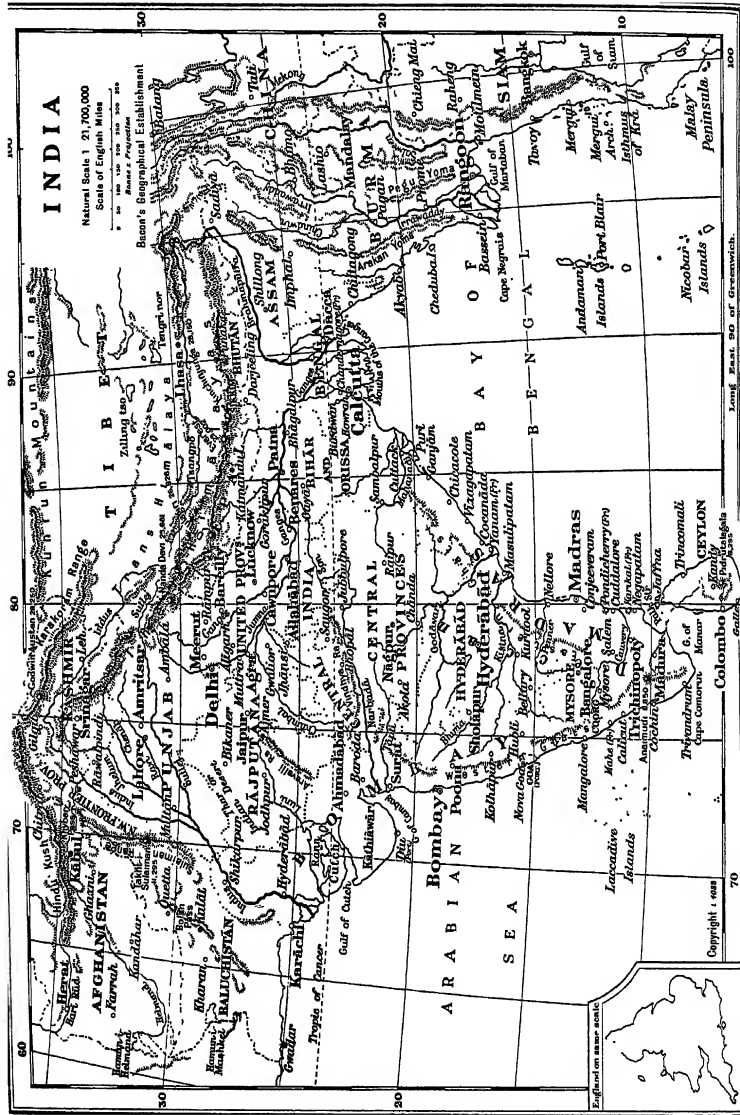




# INDIA

Natural Scale 1 21.700.000

Scale of English Miles



**Long East 90 of Greenwich.**

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England on same scale

# INDIA: LAND OF REGRETS

*by*

CHARLES SANDFORD

With a Foreword by  
ROBERT BERNAYS, M.P.



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THE FENLAND PRESS LTD.  
12 HENRIETTA STREET, W.C.2

*First Published 1934*

*Printed in Great Britain*  
AT THE PRESS OF BURALL BROTHERS  
WISBECH, CAMBS.

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## FOREWORD

My only excuse for yielding to the tempting invitation to write a foreword to this book is that I myself was in India about the same time as Mr. Sandford. His pages awaken many memories of what to me is certainly up to now the happiest period of my life. I recommend *India: Land of Regrets* to any reader who wants to puzzle out what India is really like.

Mr. Sandford's book is of particular interest now that India is on the threshold of tremendous changes. The Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament will be making its report in the early summer and in a few months time the House of Commons will be shaping the new India.

The work will be conducted in an atmosphere—so far as India is concerned—very much sweeter than seemed possible three years ago. The civil disobedience movement that we both witnessed in all its bitter and exasperating intensity is dead. I have before me as I write the latest figures from the Secretary of State for India of the numbers of convicted persons in gaol for civil disobedience offences. In January 1934 they had shrunk to 1990. In April 1932 they were 32,000. In January 1931 they were in the region of 60,000.

Congress that a few years ago seemed so formidable is split from end to end. Its two chief leaders are in hopeless antagonism. There is Mr. Gandhi, concentrating all his fire and energy on the removal of untouchability, so far as politics are concerned out of the fight. There is the Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru who cares nothing for religion, directing all his oratory and ability to the task of converting India to the Communist model. Gandhi and Nehru profess the greatest personal friendship for one another but they agree on nothing. There is a third section, and one that is growingly powerful, tired of negative and fruitless opposition and exhibiting signs of a desire to co-operate in the new constitution.

Moslems and Hindus are for the time, at any rate, living at peace with one another. The Communal award has encountered unexpectedly small opposition. There is a new spirit of responsibility amongst the political classes. It is deeply significant that both the central and provincial legislatures have shown themselves willing to shoulder the burden and the odium of passing emergency measures to preserve public order which a few years ago had to be borne almost exclusively by the Raj. Only once in his Vice-Royalty has Lord Willingdon been compelled to use his dictatorial powers to secure the passage of vital legislation.

Here at home there has been, too, some change of atmosphere. Mr. Churchill in his onslaughts on the policy of self-Government for India still speaks with power and passion but three years campaigning have brought him very few recruits. In an Indian debate this week he only carried thirty-four supporters into the Lobby with him against the Government policy.

Under the wise administration of Sir Samuel Hoare, Indians and Englishmen seem to be nearer one another's point of view than at any time in the last stormy decade.

My mind goes back to one blazing morning in April 1931 at the gateway of India in Bombay. Lord Irwin surrounded by all the pomp and majesty of the Raj is taking his leave of the India that he has so nobly served. His last words are a quotation from the inscription on the Jaipur column at Delhi:

In thought faith  
In Word Wisdom  
In deed courage  
So may India be great.

It is no longer a pious aspiration. Courage and statesmanship are making it a reality. As Mr. Sandford says "The Land of Regrets is becoming the Land of Hope."

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
March 1934

ROBERT BERNAYS

## INTRODUCTION

AMONG the more dubious of the many benefits which civilisation has conferred on us is the ease with which travel may now be undertaken. Given time and a reasonable amount of money, there is nothing to prevent the most indolent among us from journeying in something approaching luxury practically all over the world. The once uncharted wastes are policed, electrically lighted, and dotted with "super" hotels; the indefatigable Messrs. Cook organise personally-conducted tours of the jungle; and at the outposts of our far-flung Empire strong men dress for dinner and dance the latest American innovation.

All this, I suppose, has its advantages, but it has sadly diminished the prestige in which the traveller was once held. I can remember the time when on the strength of a one-day trip to Boulogne a man could acquire a reputation for a knowledge of Continental affairs and diffuse a pleasant aroma of Gallic naughtiness; and when one who had journeyed to the mystic East was considered as a bronzed and sturdy pioneer, an Empire builder, to be deferred to on all sides.

*Nous avons changé tout cela.* To-day we all travel, and India is particularly favoured in that respect. You can make the journey to Bombay in little over



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a fortnight, and it is almost feasible to consider the claims of India for the annual holiday. Most of our army is trained there, and as far as I can gather, an appreciable part of the civil population has made the trip on one or another of the couple of hundred\* Commissions that have visited the country since Sir John Simon and his colleagues set the fashion in 1928.

No adventures await the traveller to India to-day, and, apart from itinerant hawkers, the smell of the bazar, enthusiastic Bengali Congress-*wallahs*, Sikh taxi-drivers and Eurasian girls, there are no perils to be encountered. The traveller to the East acquires no *kudos*, his opinions no additional weight, and his traveller's tales (unless he is the special correspondent of one of our great "national dailies") no credence. It is the cinema that has destroyed the reputation of the traveller. The information that I have with my own eyes seen the Taj Mahal will fail deeply to impress the "film-fan" who can himself see it to-morrow for sevenpence, and with a "Mickey Mouse" cartoon thrown in.

This book, therefore, can be no record of thrilling adventures. I have discovered no dog-headed men or other curious fauna in India; I have not even found the head-hunting tribes in the North-West Frontier Province which, to the great surprise of the inhabitants of that Province, a newspaper-man

\*This figure, which is only an approximation, takes no account of such further Commissions as may have been dispatched to India while this book is in the press.

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described not so long ago; nor have I seen tigers roaming in the principal streets of Delhi, such as were observed (presumably after rather a hectic evening) by the same scribe. I went to India as a working journalist with a job to do. I was not the guest of the Government, I was not personally escorted to places of interest or fed with propaganda, and I have no axe to grind. I offer—for what they are worth—the views and impressions of an ordinary man, with no more prejudices than most of us, and with no ready-made solution for India's problems.

Since I lay claim to no special qualifications and no special opportunities, and since the subject has already been very fully treated by many who do lay claim to both, it may be asked for what reason, apart from the very excellent general reason for writing adduced by Dr. Johnson, I should inflict on a long-suffering public yet another book on India.

The majority of books on India have been written either by Civil servants or military officials of long service in the country, or by peripatetic publicists who, after devoting some three weeks to an intensive study of a sub-continent containing a fifth of the population of the world, burst into print with a highly-coloured narrative which appears to be inspired by the desire, common to publicists and the fat boy in "Pickwick", to "make our flesh creep". There is also a selection of books of thinly-veiled propaganda, subsidised by certain Indian interests, which, even though they may serve the purpose for which they are designed, are clearly out of court as

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far as independent testimony is concerned. To the second category of books on India we need not pay much attention; but it may reasonably be asked why, after a plenitude of books by Indian officials well qualified to know the facts concerning the country, another, by a nobody, should be added.

The Indian official, as a rule, is honest, painstaking, and, within certain limits, very fully acquainted with the habits, ideas and aspirations of the people. But those limits, which are both narrow and rigid, debar him from much curious knowledge available to the ordinary man and, above all, to the journalist.

In India, as I shall have occasion to remark at greater length subsequently, the compartments into which the social structure is divided are much more watertight than in any Western community. Normally, the social life of the Englishman who goes to India is confined to a narrow circle even of the Europeans in his station. The Indian Civil Service forms a small and somewhat exclusive social clique; the military, as a rule, keep to themselves; the commercial community constitute their own little society, with the "country-born" Europeans on the fringe of it; and the Anglo-Indians are outside the pale. Few Indians, and those only the higher type of the Europeanised English-speaking community—lawyers, politicians and so forth—meet the English at all, except professionally, as native clerks (Babus), shop-keepers or servants.

Wherever you find a small governing class in a

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larger population of political inferiors, and particularly where the situation is complicated by radical differences in language, customs and the whole structure of social life, there you are bound to find exclusiveness which it is easy, though not wholly justifiable, to call snobbery. Throughout the East this phenomenon occurs, but it is more marked in India than in any other country I have visited. Nor is it confined to Europeans. True, the I.C.S. man does not as a rule entertain the English shop-keeper to dinner, but the gulf that divides them is but a crevice when compared with the abyss that separates the Brahman from the *Sudra*. An English official in India may be—and often is—an able and upright administrator. He will do his best to give the Indian what he thinks the Indian ought to want. If the Indian happens to want something different, so much the worse for all concerned. It is not the administrator's fault. He has never met a real Indian; for the member of the Legislative Assembly is far less representative of the average inhabitant of the country than is an intellectual of the English Labour Party of the British working man. The European official has neither the desire nor the opportunity to meet even the "middle-class" Indian socially, and the latter would be (for a multitude of reasons) far from anxious to meet him. That the Indian proprietor of a stall in the bazar should dine with, say, the English local medical officer is far less likely than that an assistant at Woolworth's should be invited to lunch at

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Buckingham Palace to-morrow. So that, normally, the Englishman in India will never know any Indian with the exception of those very able and quite un-Indian products of Western education who are paraded for his inspection in the Council Chamber and in Government offices.

There is but one exception to this rule. Need I say that that exception is the journalist? The journalist is the only man who can meet anybody anywhere, without losing caste. The journalist can lunch with the Viceroy and dine with a Babu in the bazar—and the latter function (if he is of a trustful disposition and does not pause to wonder about the identity of the animal that supplied the meat for his *kabobs*) will be the more amusing of the two. He will be on familiar terms with Government officials, police sergeants, politicians, native clerks, lawyers, postmen, princes, station-masters, peasant missionaries, soldiers, and anybody else you like to imagine (except other journalists). And he is, so far as I know, the only man in India who can be truly catholic in his social life.

That is why it has occurred to me that I may perhaps have something to say that the officials and the pamphleteers have left unsaid. At any rate, my views, whether they be right or wrong, are my own, and are neither officially inspired nor subsidised by propaganda organisations. They are the result of some years of strenuous, though on the whole pleasurable work in India and of conversations with all sorts and conditions of men in that country.

## CHAPTER I

### THE JOURNEY OUT

GOOD advice is a commodity in regard to which the market never shows any shortage; and I received at least my fair share of it when I announced my impending departure for India. "Going East?" enquired my Uncle George, who has not so much constituted himself as grown naturally into the position of being adviser-in-chief to the family. "You should do well there. Only wish I'd had your opportunities when I was a young man." Without saying it in so many words Uncle George succeeded in conveying the impression that had he had such opportunities he would have made far better use of them than I was ever likely to do. "Just the thing for a young man to see a bit of the world," went on my uncle rattling his watch-chain reflectively, "but you'll have to be careful, you know." At this stage the solemnity of his remarks became positively Delphic. "Many a rising young fellow out East has ruined his chances by messing around after women. Now, I'm an older man than you are—much older," said Uncle George impressively, "and I know what I'm talking about. You've got a big opportunity here, and you'll make good—I know you will—if only you'll leave the women

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alone." I listen to Uncle George's words of wisdom with attention. True, he has never been further East than Margate, and hence his knowledge of India can hardly be extensive; but as far as women are concerned he has (if family gossip is to be believed) sufficient experience to warrant a respectful hearing for his views. I register an inward resolution that while in India I shall pursue the joint ideals of industry and celibacy.

Cousin Henry, who has, for as much as a fortnight at a time, experienced the enervating effect of a tropical climate on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, also has counsel to offer as to my conduct in the East. He is not so anxious about my chastity; in fact he gives me some practical advice on the subject of which Uncle George, I fear, would hardly approve. But he warns me at all costs to flee the lure of the gaming tables. He does not know, he tells me (and I believe him), how many promising careers in India have been ruined, how many fortunes dissipated, by the fatal attraction of bridge and similar soul-killing pursuits. He begs me, whatever else I may do, to shun the perils of the green baize table which, he has read, are so particularly alluring in India.

Aunt Caroline, who likes a game of bridge herself and would never, I am happy to say, suspect me of hankering after feminine charms, warns me (after the customary prognostications as to my success in the East) to shun all alcoholic liquors in India, which, she tells me, must infallibly ruin me body

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and soul if I permit myself the smallest indulgence in them.

To all my relatives I give satisfactory assurances as to my future conduct. My success in India, it appears, is assured; but with women, wine and cards all taboo, I look like having a pretty thin time.

At last the fateful day fixed for my departure is approaching. The house is filled with a vast and heterogeneous collection of articles that I have bought or had given to me as being essential to the welfare of the traveller to the East. Did I but know it, half of these will go overboard before I have reached Bombay. I have a revolver and a hundred cartridges, to defend myself against such wandering dacoits as I may encounter. I have purchased, at immense cost, one of those amazing sun-helmets that can be seen in the shops all over the west-end of London but have never yet been observed on the head of any human being. I have an enormous pair of boots, designed to protect me against the onslaughts of mosquitoes and venomous snakes. I have a hold-all containing sheets, blankets and I know not what else, and weighing about half a ton (this is useful, though). I have a patent brandy flask, a thermos, a portable stove for cooking, a camp chair, and Aunt Caroline has given me (of all things in the world) a mariner's compass. In fact I have enough junk to stock a church bazaar. For I am a greenhorn; nobody has told me that all I need to purchase in London is half-a-dozen cricket-shirts



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and a couple of pairs of shorts. I can buy a cheap topee for the rest of the journey from Simon Arzt at Port Said, and my Indian kit can be acquired in India, where it will be much cheaper and I shall have the advantage of knowing what is "the thing" locally.

But I have not yet acquired wisdom, and I set out for the East with as much luggage as any Nabob. My family insists, much against my will, on accompanying me to the docks, and we travel to Tilbury together. It is not a cheerful trip. We are all depressed at the thought of parting for some years, and the journey itself is not conducive to lightheartedness. I have never understood why it is that the neighbourhood of a dockyard should represent the extreme of squalor and desolation. Possibly this is of set purpose, so as to lessen the anguish of the departing traveller, who might reasonably be expected to rejoice at quitting so abominable a region. The effect on the immigrant, however, must be appalling; it is a marvel to me that the foreigner whose first glimpse of England is dockland does not forthwith take ship for home again.

However, this misery is relatively soon over. We have a permit to go over the ship, and we explore it with childlike gusto. We are amazed at its tremendous size; it seems a Leviathan (I am to hear it described by an experienced and disgruntled traveller the next day as "a filthy little tub"). Even my cabin appears commodious; we are deceived by

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the fact that the other three passengers who are to occupy it, and their kit, have not yet put in an appearance. We adjourn to the saloon, where I stand drinks and learn, with a pleasurable inward thrill, that I can sign "chits" for alcoholic refreshment. I do not yet know the perils of the iniquitous "chit system". There are up to the present but few passengers aboard, and the deck space appears to us enormous. All has the charm of novelty; even the Lascars seem to diffuse an aroma redolent of the Mystic East. I subsequently find another description for this aroma.

The time passes rapidly, and at last we hear the cry, "All friends ashore!" My mother weeps a little, quite quietly; I blow my nose vigorously and tell her not to be silly. My father and my brother shake my hand very hard and bid me good-bye in the casual manner decreed by English good form for occasions on which "those damned foreigners" might succumb to emotionalism. Then down to the quay; a party of Lascars, with much shouting and excitement, raises the gangway; the exiles gather at the rail and wave handkerchiefs, their friends wave their farewells from the quay—and nothing happens.

Farewells at a railway station are, goodness knows, bad enough. In the last couple of minutes before the whistle blows one finds, with a sense almost of panic, that one has nothing more to say, and one is reduced to repeating for the tenth time, "Well, good-bye. Well, you *will* write, won't you? Hope you get on all right. Well, good-bye," and so

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on, *ad nauseam*. In the fullness of time, however, the whistle does blow and the train does go off; and I venture to say that nobody has ever seen a departing train bearing away a friend without a feeling of relief that at last the seemingly interminable farewells are over.

But at the docks there is no swift, surgical termination to a leavetaking. For ten minutes after the gangway is up we appear to remain quite stationary. We still stand at the rails and wave; our relatives remain on the quay also waving. We are out of earshot so far as ordinary conversation is concerned; but occasionally some passenger bolder than the rest will lean forward and shout at the top of his voice, "Cheerio," and at once retire, covered in blushes and confusion and feeling like a fool. At last we are moving—but our insatiable friends are walking along the quay to keep pace with us. Forests of handkerchiefs continue to wave; but thank goodness the light is beginning to fade (it cannot, surely, be that my eyes are a little misty?) Now we are drawing away from the quayside; it is difficult any longer to distinguish individuals among the crowd. I suppose it's a bit silly to stay here waving any longer; everybody else seems to have given it up. Still, if they *are* still there I shouldn't like to go below before they leave. I could do with a drink, though. Oh, hell, let's go and have one.

We are at Marseilles. We, who travel by the "long sea route" and have survived the (vastly

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exaggerated) rigours of the Bay of Biscay, regard with some contempt the sybarites who have come overland by P.L.M. express and are only now joining our ship's company. We have got to know each other; we have played deck games together, and formed our individual fours for bridge in the saloon at nights. We greet these interloping strangers with no friendly eye.

Marseilles is hideous, sordid; but there is romance about it. For this is our last contact with Europe for many a long day; our next port of call is Port Said, and that will be the East; we are cut off from the West until we land again at Marseilles on the homeward journey when our first leave is due. We must make the most of Marseilles while we have the opportunity; we must carry on the tradition of all visitors to that iniquitous port, we must dine on *bouillabaisse* and visit the Blue Cinema. For myself, I derive little pleasure from these last occidental dissipations; I find *bouillabaisse* sloppy and uninteresting, and the obscenities of the Blue Cinema are a little too crude and schoolboyish for my taste. However, I have hired a tout to show me the joys of Marseilles by night, and I am content. I have conformed to tradition.

We have filled up tremendously now. From the lordly second lieutenant to the humble "jute wallah", despised of his fellow-men, nearly all classes are represented. There are even one or two Englishmen aboard, though we feel almost like an alien minority among the enormously preponderating

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Scottish community. For, to adopt the Hibernian idiom, of every twelve Englishmen who go East thirteen are Scots.

I have never regarded myself as being of a particularly sociable disposition, and rather to my surprise I find myself much in demand on board. I am elected (amid acclamation) Secretary of the Deck Sports Committee, an arduous and responsible position. Henceforth my days are taken up in arranging the draws and seeking for tardy competitors (whom I ultimately discover, to our mutual embarrassment, "poodle-faking" on the boat-deck). I tabulate results, take my turn at umpiring, and help to arrange the daily sweep on the ship's run. I have the illusion of being an overworked and harassed business-man.

What I particularly like about deck sports is their astonishing variety. Should the thrill of throwing quoits along a deck ever begin to pall on one, there is always deck-tennis, which consists of throwing quoits backwards and forwards over a net; and for those who pine for still further novelty there is the sparkling and original pastime of throwing quoits into a bucket. I feel sure there are other things one can do with a quoit, but at the moment they elude me. Deck sports will continue right up to the Red Sea, the finals will be held amid frenzied applause, and the prizes will be distributed on the night before our arrival at Bombay, on the occasion of the Fancy Dress Ball, when the Captain himself will make a speech and will refer in happy

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terms to the work of "our indefatigable secretary". But long before then I shall have grown to loathe the very sight of a quoit and to regard deck sports as the last refuge of the feeble-minded.

When deck sports are temporarily in abeyance and there is no bridge, we gather round the bar and talk. There are only two topics of conversation on board. One is the burning question, which particular young man has won the favours of a particular young woman and what is the nature and extent of those favours? The other consists of a recital of the shortcomings of the P. & O. Company. I am a greenhorn, so I am honourably excused for travelling P. & O. The others all blame themselves bitterly. They have travelled P. & O. dozens of times; each time it gets worse; they will never do it again. In my innocence I wonder why it is that these voyagers to and from the East travel by the line they dislike so much. I subsequently learn that this is a sort of tradition. Everybody grumbles at the P. & O. and everybody uses it. They are always going by the Dutch, Italian or Japanese line next time; but they never do. They keep on travelling by the P. & O., and they keep on expressing their bitter resentment at its deficiencies. I do not think that these complaints against the P. & O. are based on any specific grievance; they are more an expression of the Englishman's inherent desire to grumble. We are a long-suffering people, but we must have our grouse; we could never be happy otherwise.

Port Said. This is indeed the Mystic East at last.

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The queer, square white buildings with their green sun-blinds, the coconut and date palms, the heterogeneous Semitic population in fez and burnous, the heat, the flies, the beggars whining for *baksheesh*—all are most satisfyingly in accordance with my expectations. I don what I fondly believe to be suitable tropical kit and go ashore, ready for whatever Arabian-Nights adventure the fates may send. Hardly have I set foot on the landing stage when a mysterious-looking Arab approaches me with a furtive and confidential air. What secret of Oriental intrigue is he about to reveal? “Sair,” he whispers ingratiatingly, “you want buy Paris postcards?” And he produces from the interior of the blanket-like garment in which he is clad a bundle of the same old, dreary zoophilic rubbish that is always offered to the tourist in any big city. “Nice,” he explains painstakingly. “Photos of ladies and animals.” It is my first introduction to the East, and it is typical of Port Said, that city of shams, where the postcards come from Paris and the “Oriental curios” from Birmingham.

We dock at four o'clock in the morning, but within ten minutes of our arrival the city is awake. Port Said lives on passing tourists. Every shop is open as soon as our advent is known; hawkers, beggars, “gilli-gilli men”, divers, fortune-tellers, sellers of carpets and cheap jewellery, all prepare to swoop down on their prey. Before any of the passengers are allowed to land the ship is invaded by the “gilli-gilli men” (native conjurors) and by a

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number of gentlemen who will dive for shillings and will swim underneath the ship, coming up on the other side, for half-a-crown. These people have discovered that the overwhelming majority of Europeans who travel East are Scottish, and they therefore make a point of addressing every potential client as "Mr. Macpherson" or "Mr. Mackenzie". This shows enterprise; I am unable to say whether it is remunerative or not.

We visit Simon Arzt at Port Said, partly because we have to buy the prizes for those abominable deck sports and partly because everybody always does. But banish from your mind any idea of a stall in an Eastern bazar, with a bearded and be-turbaned native chaffering over piastres as he sits cross-legged and puffing at his narghile. Simon Arzt is the Selfridge of the East; it is a big, spacious store, the price of everything is marked in plain figures, and you are served by courteous and soft-spoken Eurasians almost as white as yourself. You can spend English money without being outrageously swindled on the exchange, and the prices charged are not unreasonable. The original Simon Arzt, if there ever was such a person, showed great perspicuity in the choice of a site for his emporium. Every European going East must purchase a topee at Port Said; every European returning home buys a soft hat and joyously flings his topee overboard (you will see dozens of them floating around at the northern entrance to the Suez Canal). From such small beginnings are great businesses built. Now



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Simon Arzt has imposing premises on the front, and can supply you with anything from a packet of pins to a complete fancy-dress. And all this arises from the enterprise of one man who noticed that Port Said is just the place where one wants to change one's hat.

Our untimely arrival at Port Said—where we spend no more than four hours—deprives us of only one experience. I am told that the nocturnal amusements in that city are varied and peculiar; but these, apparently, cannot be arranged in the early hours of the morning. However, we are only four days out from Marseilles, and I gather that Port Said offers simply an actual presentation of what we saw on the screen at the Blue Cinema. As I am in no immediate need of an emetic, I bear this deprivation with fortitude.

Off again; and we spend a depressing twelve hours passing through the Suez Canal. It is grillingly hot, with not a breath of air, and the scenery exhibits a certain lack of variety. In every direction an arid waste of sand stretches to the horizon. It is a relief to get into the Red Sea, although the weather becomes hotter than ever. Most of us sleep on the deck at nights now, and I am pleased to see that the enervating effects of the heat cause no diminution in the gallantry of our younger males.

We are on the last lap now, and I note with some interest the change in the status of our Indian passengers. In the Mediterranean I could see no evidence of any racial discrimination; apparently

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the nearer an Indian approaches to India the lower he sinks in the social scale. None of the European girls dance with Indians now, though they were doing so without apparent reluctance up to a few days ago. This seems to me a curious phenomenon. Perhaps I shall understand it better when I have lived in India, or perhaps it is one of those things which, as Lord Dundreary said, "no feller can understand".

The last night on board. This is the occasion of unparalleled rejoicings, in connection with which the great fancy-dress ball is held, with prizes for the best costumes made on board. All social barriers are broken down; certain democratically-minded first-class passengers even exchange greetings with second-saloon *wallahs*. We all consume immense numbers of *chota pegs*, and under their mellowing influence the least prepossessing of our fellow passengers are seen to be, after all, the best of fellows. The band plays "Auld Lang Syne", and a lump rises in our throats. How sad to think that this happy family must be dispersed to-morrow! I find myself shaking hands vigorously with a comparative stranger while we assure each other, with almost uncontrollable emotion, of our mutual esteem and devotion.

Later on, when the effect of the *chota pegs* has somewhat worn off, I go for a final stroll round the deck with my friend Farrar-Browne, an R.A.F. man who is going up to Peshawar. "So to-morrow," he says with a sigh, "is going to see us back again in

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the Land of Regrets. I suppose it's not a bad life in India really. One gets more money than one would at home, there's plenty of social life in the clubs and stations, and many little luxuries that a man in an equivalent position in England could never have for. But one pays in other ways—one pays." He was silent for a moment. "You have the devil's climate to put up with, and precious little amusement other than soaking up whiskey. You give the best years of your life to the country, and then they chuck you out, with a curried liver and very expensive tastes and no money to gratify them. Look at those poor old buffers you see vegetating at Eastbourne or Worthing," went on Farrar-Browne. "They've all been Deputy Commissioners or Secretaries of one kind or another, with troops of servants and everybody salaaming whenever they put in appearance. Now they struggle along, with their wretched little pensions, in seaside boarding houses. One of the world's worst tragedies is to spend the last quarters of your life being a somebody and then suddenly to find you're a nobody. And that's one of the things that India does to you. Yes," said Farrar-Browne, "it's the Land of Regrets all right. And on this note we went to bed.

## CHAPTER II

### TO THE MOFUSSIL

WE are in India at last. A steady drizzle is falling—Bombay always has more than its share of rainfall—yet my first impression, an impression that persisted and is still the outstanding one of all that I gathered in India, is one of colour—brilliant, riotous, all-pervading colour. Colour and noise.

The quay at Bombay is a soul-satisfying sight to the European accustomed to the sombre half-tones of these darker climes. In its variegated hues it is reminiscent of the parrot-house at the Zoo, and in its deafening and unintelligible clamour it also bears out the analogy. For it always takes a dozen men to do a job in India. One (a despised coolie) does the actual work; two “supervise”; and the remaining nine stand by and shout. From the standpoint of mere efficiency this procedure may leave something to be desired; but the traveller’s feeling of importance is enhanced by the numerical strength of his retinue, besides, it helps to solve the unemployment problem. I verily believe that half the population of Bombay was pressed into service for the arduous task of transporting my humble luggage from ship to quay and passing it through the customs; the job took best part of the morning.

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Having an hour to spare before leaving for Lucknow, I sat on the verandah of one of the hotels drinking beer (which in India is appallingly dear and villainously bad), and watched the crowds as they passed. It was a fascinating sight. Here is no dull uniformity of costume, no all-pervading drab lounge suit and soft hat. From the humble *chupprassi* (messenger), who earns about twenty rupees a month and dresses like a cross between a ruling Prince and a commissionaire outside a "super" cinema, to the coolie woman, who wears nothing but a length of vividly-coloured material draped round her shapely form, all are clothed strikingly and at the same time tastefully. No European could wear the Indian clothes. Our dull, pasty, unhealthy-looking complexions could never stand the contrast with the rich hues of scarlet and purple which serve to set off the sun-tanned limbs of the Indian; nor, it must with regret be admitted, have the majority of our women the figures to carry off the simple draping of a boldly coloured *sari*. The Indian coolie woman, accustomed from her early youth to carry heavy burdens on her head, has the figure and carriage of a goddess. Her face is generally in sharp and somewhat disappointing contrast; but I suppose one cannot have everything.

Nowhere else in the world will one see so variegated a collection of types as pass in review before the watcher in the streets of Bombay. Here struts a Bengali Babu, be-spectacled, in *dhoti* and little round hat, with his shirt loose outside and with the

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inevitable umbrella; here a lean and barefoot coolie; an elderly Sikh, venerable and martial in appearance, flashes by on a motor-cycle, his beard flying in the breeze; two Eurasians, in flimsy European clothes and wearing white topees, pass by conversing in sing-song and voluble *chi-chi* (the characteristic clipped speech typical of Anglo-Indians); a wealthy Parsee drives in his Daimler past a nearly naked and supremely holy Fakir; all types jostle one another along the crowded pavement—beggars and princes, the scholarly Brahman pandit and the lower-caste *Banya*, Europeans and humble factory hands; while in the roadway is every description of vehicle, from the lordly Rolls-Royce to the creaking, jolting bullock-cart, precariously held together with ropes of straw and looking like one of the wildest fantasies of Heath Robinson.

The *Abdar*, a tall, white-robed, barefoot attendant brings me my bill with many salaams, and accepts with exaggerated gratitude a tip that I would never have dared to offer to a London waiter. I take a taxi to the station, and meet for the first time the Sikh taxi-driver. By a miracle I arrive at the station physically unharmed, but with shattered nerves. I am not normally a timid passenger. London traffic holds no terrors for me, and I have even survived a taxi journey in Paris without any obvious display of my inward fears. But that Sikh driver threw me into a state of panic terror before I had been two minutes in his cab. We dashed along the crowded streets at hair-raising speed, shaving

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past lorries and bullock-carts with millimetres to spare and evading sudden death for ourselves and for unwary pedestrians by what seemed to be a constant succession of miracles, while my driver hurled shouts and imprecations at anybody and everybody who threatened to impede his headlong career. When, after what seemed years of misery, I alighted, I vowed that never again as long as I stayed in India would I entrust my valuable life to a Sikh driver. Could I then have foreseen that one day I was destined to sit in agonised apprehension behind one of these brigands all along the mountain road from Kalka to Simla, suffering the tortures of the damned at every hairpin bend on that terrifying trip, I verily believe that I should have insisted on taking the next boat home.

A railway station is, to me at least, always an enchanting place. There is romance inherent in its very atmosphere of mysterious arrivals and of departures for Heaven knows what unknown destinations. But if the dingy Western railway terminus has its charm, how much more attractive is the Eastern station, with its colour, its bustle, and, above all, its strangeness to Western eyes.

The Indian railway is broad-gauged, and the compartments are wide, commodious, and furnished with armchairs, ample lighting, and every convenience. (I am referring, I need hardly say, to the first-class compartments.) My lower berth is reserved for me, and after I have supervised the stowing of my luggage I have time to spare to wander

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the length of the train and to observe my fellow-passengers and the accommodation allotted to them. Crowds of picturesque natives are squatting all along the platform; and although this is a long train, I am rather puzzled to know how room will be found for all of them. I have as yet no idea how many Indians can be crowded into one third-class compartment no bigger than that reserved for myself and one other passenger. Even apart from that, however, I am in error in supposing that the presence of several hundred Indians on the platform necessarily means that they are going to travel by my train. When an Indian (I refer, of course, to the less educated classes) intends to take a journey, it never occurs to him to consult a railway timetable, even if he could understand so abstruse a work. He merely goes, with his family, to the station, and squats there, with imperturbable patience, until a train going in the direction he desires happens to arrive. It may be a matter of five or six hours; it may be a couple of days. *Cooch parwah nahin\**; it is all the same to him. He has his *pan* (betel nut) to chew, and wandering hawkers will supply him with such slender rations as he may need to support life during the interval. As for the delay, that is nothing. One day is as good as another in the East.

The third-class accommodation is appalling;

\**Cooch parwah nahin* is the Indian equivalent of the Russian *nichevo*. The nearest one can get to a translation is "What does it all matter?" But the phrase expresses and symbolises the philosophy that is common to many of the Indians and to the Russian types familiarised by Tchekov.



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there is no drinking water available and no sanitary conveniences—this in a country where an ordinary railway journey may be anything in the neighbourhood of a thousand miles and may last from twelve to thirty-six hours. Throughout this length of time dozens of natives will sit huddled together on the floor of a third-class compartment, sweltering in the cruel midday heat of the plains, and enduring it all with a patient resignation that is almost animal. *Cooch parwah nahin*. They will get to their destination some time or other. Meanwhile they chatter and chew and are not actively unhappy—which to us, in our comfortable first-class carriage, is a very consoling thought.

No European, however well acclimatised to India, could travel under these conditions. It is, as a matter of fact, unusual for a European to travel third-class at all; even those who are being sent home through the charity of the European Association are allotted second-class accommodation. But in case any European should be forced, by stress of circumstances, to travel third-class, special compartments are reserved for this purpose, and are labelled "Europeans and Anglo-Indians only". This was at first a puzzle to me; I had always thought that an Anglo-Indian was an Englishman of long residence in India, and that I, at present a mere newcomer, should in the course of time earn the right to that honourable appellation. The term is now, however, used as a euphemism for "Eurasian", the latter word having acquired a

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derogatory significance. "European", by the way, appears to mean any member of the white races born in the West; Americans are included in this category.

It is rather strange that on the Indian railways the only way to avoid travelling with Indians (if one wishes to avoid it) is to take a third-class ticket, for it is only in the "special" third-class compartments that any discrimination is made by the authorities. As far as I am concerned, I believe I am as free from racial prejudice as anyone can be, but nevertheless I must confess that, as a general rule, I prefer a European for my fellow-passenger. East is East and West is West, and there are certain Indian customs in connection with personal hygiene which, though doubtless just as sanitary as our Western methods, are nevertheless unpleasing to the European.

At last I arrive in Lucknow. There is some delay in my appointment in Delhi, and I have to spend a couple of months in the United Provinces before going on to the capital. Lucknow is the Mofussil—in other words it is an out-station.

"The Mofussil" is a term that is rather loosely used in India; it is taken to mean almost anywhere but Calcutta or Bombay, although the civic pride of the citizens of Delhi makes them protest, with some justification, against the classing of the Imperial Capital as a mere suburb in comparison with the larger but less politically important cities. But Lucknow has no such pretensions. It is,

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and it is content to remain, out of the hurly-burly.

Lucknow—or, as the natives prefer to call it, Nucklow—is, I still think, the pleasantest station I have visited in India. Round about the Civil Lines, where most of the European population lives—the military are always quartered in the Cantonment area—it is beautifully laid out. Space is not a matter that has to be very seriously considered even in the larger towns in India, and every house of any size at all has a garden such as would be undreamt of by any but the superlatively rich over here. Many of the buildings are quite palatial—although the railway station, which seems to have come out in rather a severe rash of minarets, is an eyesore—and there are parks, broad avenues, and even quite a respectable Zoological Gardens. The inhabitants are mainly Mohammedans, and the United Provinces Mohammedan is generally a well-built and athletic fellow; they provide a respectable proportion of the Indian Army. For those who enjoy sightseeing, there are many spots of historical and other interest in the vicinity, and for those who enjoy reading about such things there are guide-books to be obtained. I hope I shall be forgiven if I decline to turn this book into a sort of Oriental Baedeker; it would save me a lot of trouble, but would be almost as depressing to write as guide-books are (to me) depressing to read.

From the stately European quarter in Lucknow and the Hazrat Ganj (the shopping centre) it is

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hardly a step to the Chauk—the native bazar. Here one can see India unadulterated. Bombay, even in the native quarters, is Europeanised; except for surface differences of clothing and so forth it is, like all big cities, more or less international. But in the Chauk one can see the Indian worker and trader in his natural conditions, in the little raised booths along the bazar that have remained unaltered in style for hundreds of generations.

But my stay in Lucknow is only in the nature of a short holiday before my real job in India begins, and it is with a sense of pleasurable anticipation that I leave for Delhi.

Although Delhi has now displaced Calcutta as the Imperial Capital of India, nevertheless its glory has departed. As a commercial centre it is a mere village compared with Calcutta, the second city of the Empire; and when in the hot weather the Government and the bulk of the Secretariat move to Simla, Delhi becomes almost moribund. Most of the principal shops transfer their activities to their Simla branches; and the few stalwarts who are left to swelter in the Plains while the mercury in the thermometer is hovering around boiling-point have the sensation of being the abandoned inhabitants of a deserted village. Even during the Season, when the official business of the country is being transacted in Delhi, one does not experience the feeling of being at the fountain-head of things. The atmosphere is more or less parochial; and the real official capital—New Delhi—is at

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Raisina, some ten or twelve miles from Delhi proper.

Delhi is to-day (except when political disturbances occur to liven up the proceedings) calm, disciplined and well-policed, with broad roads and efficiently regulated traffic. The Chandni Chowk, the principal street in the native quarter, is a magnificent thoroughfare three-quarters of a mile in length and fifty yards in width, with an avenue of nim and pipal trees down the centre dividing it into two separate roads. It is quiet and orderly; stalwart Indian policemen direct the traffic and keep a wary eye open for any *badmashes* (hooligans) who might be tempted by the rich hoards of gold and silver ware in the unpretentious little booths along the sidewalk to attempt the Indian equivalent of a "smash-and-grab raid"; and European Mem-Sahibs shop at the provision stores without thought of any danger. Yet blood has flowed in the Chandni Chowk, and that within recent history. It was here that a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge in 1912; and in the crowded courtyards that abut on the Chowk many dangerous characters reside. History tells that in 1739 the Chandni Chowk was the scene of appalling slaughter when the Persian troops under Nadir Shah massacred no less than a hundred thousand of the inhabitants. Happily under British rule such barbarities are unheard of. By the way, I nearly forgot to mention that it was also in the Chandni Chowk that, in 1857, Major Hodson exposed the body of the Moghul Prince

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killed by him, within sight of the Tomb of Hanuman.

The European shopping centre is Kashmir Gate. Here the younger element can always patronise Davico's for a tea-dance, if the Club has nothing to offer that particular evening, and for the "déclassés" (those who, while technically Europeans, are not quite "in the swing") and for Anglo-Indians, Alassia's provide similar entertainment of a less socially exalted type. Cars abound—also the humble *tonga*. But the *tonga* definitely deserves a paragraph to itself.

Of all abominable vehicles designed for the discomfort of man the *tonga* must take first place. A kind of "one-horse shay", it rises to an apex in the middle, and has its centre of gravity Heaven alone knows where. The driver sits at the front, and the passenger or passengers take their places behind; they are always facing to the rear, which in itself is depressing. The seat is built at such an angle that one must be continually clinging to the handrail for fear of being precipitated into the roadway, while the danger of this is increased by the fact that the seat itself is covered with the shiniest and slipperiest kind of American cloth. The horse is generally a miserable, spavined, knock-kneed creature which inspires a mixture of pity and disgust; only under the compulsion of nearly incessant flagellation will it travel at all. But the *tonga*-driver has mastered the art of inflicting the maximum of pain with the minimum of physical exertion; each

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lash of his whip is administered with an almost loving care that would excite admiration for its anatomical precision did it not inspire disgust for its revolting cruelty. The *tonga* pony is always underfed, its rations consist of little but grass; and anybody who has travelled for any distance behind a grass-fed pony will not need to be told that there are certain unpleasantnesses inherent in the experience. A drive in a *tonga* is far from a pleasure for the squeamish; personally I have always felt much more sympathy for the wretched pony than I have for the human beasts of burden who provide the motive power for the rickshaws in the Hills.

Delhi is an ugly station, and despite its historic associations there is little in it that excites the imagination as does, for instance, the Residency at Lucknow. Even in the surrounding neighbourhood there are but few places of interest; the principal local "sight" is the Kutab Minar, an immense and remarkably hideous tower nearly two hundred and fifty feet in height and dating back to the thirteenth century. An occasional visit to the Kutab Minar is "the done thing" in Delhi. The very young take delight in climbing the myriad steps to the top and "snapping" the view from there; while the slightly older prefer to make their visits by moonlight. The Kutab is a favourite spot for lovers; and he who journeys there by night must step warily lest he disturb, to the embarrassment of all concerned, a couple who are worshipping Aphrodite after their fashion.

## TO THE MOFUSSIL

Old Delhi, despite many drawbacks, has its redeeming features. It is well-wooded, and even in the hottest weather there is a modicum of shade to be had; there are parks, open spaces, and even one or two spots of considerable beauty. New Delhi is hideous; it has been so obviously "planned" that it looks more like an architect's drawing than a place meant for human habitation. Hundreds of squat, square white buildings that seem to radiate heat even when the weather is approximately cool, and are depressingly alike apparently down to the last stone in their barrack-like walls, are arranged in the neatest of geometrical patterns, while the Government buildings vary only by being a little larger and a little uglier than the others. The roads are a miracle of straightness, with a circle at each crossing and with a policeman stationed to see that oncoming cars traverse the circumference in clockwise direction. One can see that the whole place is yet haunted by the still, dead ghost of Sir Edwin Lutyens' ruler and compasses.

When I paid a visit to the Delhi Flying Club I was taken in one of the Club's 'planes for a "joy-ride" over Delhi, New and Old. It made a striking contrast. The visitor, I believe, is supposed to remark on the spacious cleanliness of New Delhi as compared with the crowded and higgledy-piggledy mess that forms the old city, and particularly the native quarter of it. Personally I thought the comparison all in favour of Old Delhi, and I vow I would rather occupy one of the most ramshackle



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hovels in the bazar than even the most hygienic of the barracks constructed for the inhabitants of New Delhi. I am afraid I am old-fashioned; I like a town that has happened better than one that has been constructed, and I like comfort even if to secure it I have to put up with a little dirt. The bazar smells, some of its occupants are insufficiently washed and are unhygienic in their habits; but the bazar is alive. Perhaps it may be said that the bazar is alive in more senses than one; but even if that be so, I prefer its life to the unlovely and sterilised death of New Delhi.

But in my early days in Delhi I had little time for these observations. First there was my job to be attended to and to be got into some sort of order before I could find the leisure to explore the city and its surroundings.

## CHAPTER III

### AT WORK

THE office, on the whole, impresses me favourably. As a building it certainly surpasses my expectations. It is almost palatial, though perhaps a little too ornate for my sober taste; but it is spacious, and looks as if it would be fairly cool when the Indian sun is doing its worst. The ground floor is devoted to the linotypes and machines (the latter two rather out-of-date specimens that do not inspire me with confidence), and the first floor is shared by the business and circulation departments and the editorial offices. The "library" is rather a shock; it consists of an *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a dictionary, and a handbook on Delhi; and there is no morgue. (I should perhaps explain for the benefit of non-journalistic readers that the morgue is a collection of obituary notices of prominent persons still in the land of the living, which are prepared in advance so that the sudden demise of somebody "in the news" shall not catch the editorial department napping.) Modern progress is represented by a telephone with the (then) unfamiliar dialling system, while the unchanging East finds its symbol in the primitive nature of the sanitary arrangements.

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The personnel is perhaps less impressive than the precincts. Rather to my surprise I find that I am expected to produce an English newspaper with no European assistance whatever, although my staff includes two Anglo-Indians who would probably lay claim to the title. I am first introduced to Mr. Abdul Aziz, the Assistant Editor. He is an immensely tall, thin man, suffering from some obscure form of skin disease that makes the handshake demanded by courtesy a duty rather than a pleasure. Somewhat to my surprise, I find Mr. Abdul Aziz to be slightly drunk, and note that he has selected as suitable for office wear an ancient and ill-fitting pair of Jodhpur riding-breeches. I subsequently discover that he is never to be seen in any other costume—the irreverent maintain that he sleeps in it—and that a condition of partial inebriation is permanent with him. Mr. Abdul Aziz was educated in England—he mentions the fact almost before our mutual greetings are over—and he expresses his pleasure in welcoming me as his colleague, his chief, and a fellow public-school man. I murmur something polite in acknowledgment, meanwhile surreptitiously rubbing my right palm on my trousers, and wondering whether I have remembered to pack any lysol in my kit. Before I can get away he has invited me to dinner; I excuse myself for that evening, but I know that I am only postponing the evil hour.

Ram Lal is my political correspondent and adviser on policy as regards Indian affairs. Although

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he has never left the shores of India, his English is excellent—too excellent, in fact; one can recognise that it is the language of books and not of conversation. He is reserved, cultured, courtly—I would say a gentleman were it not that that word has become debased coinage these days—but he has the air of one perpetually at odds with the world. As I came to know later on, his is the sorrow of the sceptic. He is of the stuff of martyrs; he would willingly go to the stake for his faith, if only he had a faith for which to suffer. Of an orthodox Brahman family, he has abjured Hinduism without finding any other religion that will answer his needs; he longs to see his country free, but has no confidence in India's ability to govern herself. He is a patriot without illusions, a fanatic without faith. And he is profoundly unhappy. He has succeeded, with some difficulty, in persuading himself that he is a Swarajist; and yet it is his lot in life to help me in the composition of anti-Swarajist leaders. He blames himself bitterly for this; he is, he says, betraying his country because he lacks the courage to starve for her. But Ram Lal does himself an injustice. He would starve for a cause if he believed in it. It is his misfortune (or perhaps his good fortune; who shall measure these things?) never quite to believe in anything. But I find him to be a first-rate man at his job, with an unrivalled knowledge of Indian political affairs and personalities, and to me personally a very good friend.

There are four sub-editors, two Anglo-Indians,

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a Bengali Hindu and a Punjabi Mussulman. Throughout the staff I find a similar variety of religion and race among our employees. This is a wise precaution. The Indian calendar is full of holidays—holidays ordained by the Government as well as Hindu and Mohammedan religious holidays. With a mixed staff, although you will find somebody absent for one reason or other about once a week, you will avoid the dilemma of sometimes finding yourself committed to the task of producing a paper with no staff at all.

I descend to the printing department, and there meet Hassan, the Press Superintendent. He is a burly ruffian, an untiring worker, and the pink of courtesy to all Europeans. He rules his men with a rod of iron, and I really believe they fear him more than the devil himself. I subsequently learned his method of enforcing discipline. It is by means of small loans which he insists on making, at ruinous interest, to his compositors. Should any of them show the smallest sign of insubordination, a hint at foreclosure is always sufficient to bring the malcontent to reason. When I discovered this iniquity I seriously considered my obvious duty to put a stop to it. But the loss in efficiency that would inevitably follow gave me pause, and finally I compounded with my conscience and decided to shut my eyes to an abuse which had the merit of being so remarkably useful to myself. Doubtless this was achieved by a process of sophistry; but such

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sophistry is not without its uses in journalism as well as in Empire legislation.

I have not yet mentioned—would that I could forget them!—the proof-readers. There are two varieties of readers in India: those who admit that they know no English, and those who know no English. The former are preferable. An English editor with no experience of the East is lucky if his readers do not drive him mad in a fortnight. It is not only that it is impossible to get anything like a clean proof without at least half-a-dozen revises and that proper names are invariably and fantastically misspelt, but the miracles of ineptitude who call themselves readers in India will persist in making unauthorised emendations in copy. That is why I say that readers and compositors who profess to know no English are preferable. They will at least try to produce what they think the copy looks like. The wretched creatures who describe themselves as “English-speaking” endeavour to produce what they think you may have meant. If you make use of an unfamiliar word, it will never occur to the sapient reader that there is perhaps a word in the English language with which he is unacquainted and that it might be as well to consult a dictionary. He will at once assume that *you* have made a mistake, and will proceed to substitute some totally inapplicable word which he happens previously to have met. I forget how many idiocies of this description occurred to exasperate me while I was in India. Finally, after reading an article of my own

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on the results of "accidental education in Eastern schools", and being blandly informed by my head reader that he had substituted the word "accidental" for my clearly typed "occidental" because he had never come across the latter word, I decided, so far as possible, myself to read the final proofs of all matter intended for the leader page. Other pages had to take their chance, for it was impossible for me to read everything, and I was powerless to avoid such incidents as the printing, in the account of a wedding, of a description of "the bird's going-away dress".

For another trouble which arose I must, I suppose, accept some of the blame. I had not yet learned the danger of trusting to the discretion of Indian sub-editors. I was getting tired of the flat, uninteresting headings with which news paragraphs were being published, and I asked the "subs", when they had a suitable story, to try and think out something rather "snappier" in the way of a caption. This was an error of judgment, as I discovered the next morning. The paper contained two specimens of "snappy" headings. One, which concerned a trivial mishap suffered by a judge while out riding, and which was hardly worthy of a head at all, read: "Judge Rides for a Fall; Rider Uninjured but Horse Gets It in the Neck". The other, which I have always thought one of the finest examples of an anti-climax I have ever seen, was as follows:—

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### TERRIBLE ACCIDENT AT BARRACKPUR RACES HORSE INJURED

After this it occurred to me that dullness with dignity was preferable to the indigenous idea of "snappiness".

Apart from a few isolated out-station correspondents in the principal cities—and financial considerations generally forbid anything very extensive in this direction—the main sources on which one has to rely for news in India are Reuter and the Associated Press. The latter confines itself to Indian news, which it broadcasts to its subscribers, and its service, though sometimes slightly flavoured with propaganda, is on the whole fairly satisfactory. At the time of which I am speaking, the late K. C. Roy was the moving spirit of the "A.P." He had a seat in the Legislative Assembly (as a Nominated Member), and he was a little liable to make use of the organisation he controlled to subserve the interests of the particular group or clique in the Assembly that he was supporting. Roy was not a member of any party (I believe he took his seat on the "Independent" ticket), and it was always a matter of some doubt whither he was tending; I think he liked to conceive of himself as a wily and subtle wire-puller who was the real though unseen director of the puppets who called themselves Government supporters or Swarajists. How much power—if any—he really wielded it would be difficult to say; he had a way of telling you nothing



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and at the same time conveying a subtle hint of the staggering secrets he *could* impart if only he chose to do so. But personally I always suspected him to be a sphinx without a secret.

With only these two sources of general information (and, of course, British Official Wireless, which serves to supplement Reuter but arrives some hours later), it is very difficult to achieve anything in the nature of a "scoop" in Indian journalism. As far as news is concerned there is little to choose between one competently-run newspaper and another. The only ways to score over one's competitors are by literary features, the adequate *presentation* of news, and by a careful study of the railway time-table. If, for example, you find that you can supply a certain station with the edition of your paper that closes for press at 4 a.m. while your contemporary, published elsewhere, must, in order to be on sale at the same time, send an edition that "goes to bed" at 2 a.m., you will naturally give most prominence, in that edition, to news received between two and four. Maybe there will be only a couple more paragraphs in it; but these adequately "splashed" on the front page—perhaps with the heading of "special late extra" or something like that—will almost give the illusion of a completely new paper. If the boot is on the other foot and your contemporary can manage to keep open for news a couple of hours later than you can, then the best thing to do is to abandon all thoughts of competing as far as late news is concerned and to concentrate on trying to catch an

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earlier train, so as to be on sale (even if you make up with yesterday's news) earlier than your rival can. You will thus be able to claim, either that your paper is the first to be delivered or else that you are "up to the minute" with the latest news. Whichever may apply, you will of course point out that it is this that shows true journalistic enterprise. The newspaper-reading public in India is not hypercritical, and either slogan will generally be found effective.

The last twenty minutes before going to press in India is a hectic time. It is probably about half past three in the morning, but still the temperature is higher than a European can support with comfort. But even were the weather temperate, the general atmosphere of bustle and excitement, coupled with the herculean task of infusing some energy into a crowd of leisurely Asiatics who hold the view that one train is as good as another and that so long as the paper gets off some time or other it will do, is enough to create the illusion of heat. At this time the whole editorial staff is in the press room. Two "subs" are supervising the make-up of the last two pages; these are always made up on the stone. The editor is running from one to another, watch in hand, harassing the Press Superintendent and swearing that if a train is missed he will sack everybody concerned and half those who are not concerned. An Associated Press peon arrives with a message; "Too late," says the Press Superintendent. No, I tell him, it will have to go in. "Aziz, do a

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few lines about this. We'll box it for the front page, Hassan. I'll take a paragraph out of the Assembly debate to make room for it. Ram Lal, would you cut Achariyah or Jinnah? All right. Hassan, have you got that paragraph set yet? My God, what are your men doing? Tell the *soor k'bacchas*\* to get a move on! Is page nine on the stone yet? All right, let's have a pull of it. Oh, Lord, this won't do. Look here, transpose these two columns and put that paragraph at the top of column three. You'll have to set a new head for it—eighteen-point caps. Where's the double-column head for the lead story? Then who the devil *has* got it? Isn't it your job to look after—oh, all right, here it is. Oh, *do* get a move on—only ten minutes more to go. Is the van ready? Right. Here's page one; lend me a pencil, somebody. Right, that'll do; get it on the machine, Hassan; what are you waiting for? Careful with that forme, man, what the hell are you doing? *Toom pargle hai?*†” And at last we are off, the drone of the machines begins (pray Heaven there may be no breakdown to-night!) I pass the machine proof; a few minutes later a complete copy of the paper is in my hands. Then the first bundle goes off for dispatch, I wipe my fevered brow, and we are finished—till to-morrow.

Sub-editors and readers in India both have their weaknesses, but I doubt if either of them can reach to the really sublime heights of inefficiency attained

\*“Sons of swine”—the worst insult that can be offered to a Mohammedan.

†“Are you mad?”

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by the native clerk, the Bengali Babu. The Babu's English is the eighth wonder of the world; it must be seen to be believed. Where he picks it up it is beyond me to imagine; it is unlike anything written by any other of God's creatures. Imagine an ill-digested mixture of Carlyle and Macaulay, spiced with oriental imagery and obsequiousness, complicated with a vocabulary at the same time recondite and insufficient, and you will have a vague idea of how a Babu's letters read. And yet they will persist in writing letters; they write letters every day, at inordinate length and all about nothing. Any man in a position of responsibility in India will receive reams of them, mainly in the form of petitions or of complaints against colleagues. The Babu will never come straight to his employer with a verbal request or complaint. He prefers to trust to his epistolatory skill, and to place on the *Burra Sahib's* desk a long, involved and flowery communication, plastered with "Your Honour"'s and "My Lord"'s. These things become a pest and a torment; but it cannot be denied that some of them are really very funny.

When the Babu bursts into print, the results are not less amusing than are the beauties of his epistolatory style. I quote from the printed leaflet sent out by the Delhi Amateur Dramatic Club to announce the production of their "entirely new and famous drama", "Dhuru Bhagat":—

This is an entirely new production presenting great moral and social aspects of life. It has never been staged by any other professional

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company or amateur club but for the first time it was played by us on the 5th March last and greatly appreciated by the gentry who were pleased to express their approval by awarding Medals to some actors and donations to the club. Owing to the continuous demand for repetition by the public, the drama is to be presented again on the 29th instant and it is hoped that the citizen of Delhi will muster strong on this occasion to encourage the gentlemen amateurs in their attempts towards moral, social and religious uplift in daily life and revival of one of the fine arts of ancient India. . . . Prostitutes will not be allowed in Special or Reserved classes.

Here is another piece of literature, also emanating from the world of the theatre. It is from a gentleman in Madras, who specialises in Punch and Judy shows and similar entertainments.

A beam of smile on children's face doth light a home with boundless joy and inspire all with the self-same feeling. Need it then be told that a "Merry-go-round" is the children's favourite, the incessant fountain of their joy, scattering all around pleasure and cheer in its wanton rounds?

During Christmas Dinners, "At Homes" New years' eves, Children's treats, Birth-day celebrities, Association anniversaries and such like social occasions that need lighthearted amusement to govern the function, a "Merry-

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go-round" or a performance of the "Punch and Judy" or the Marionettes, would be the suitable companion cretive of mirth and cheer expressed by sweet smiles and hearty laughter.

These never fail to please one and all and render their spirits buoyant. These are harmless mirth-makers to swell the heart with pleasure in silence and secrecy.

The undersigned who is ever willing to cater to the amusement of others, solicits your kind patronage.

Finally, I append a contribution sent to me, in complete seriousness, by one of my correspondents (a Bachelor of Arts, by the way). I print this as I received it, and without comment, except that the talented reporter in question is, so far as I know, the only journalist who has ever succeeded in bringing back a "story" from the Celestial Regions.

The Annual Church Parade Service was held in St. John's Church last Sunday, at 11 a.m. to commemorate the loss of life from the tragic landslip of 1880.

It is very gratifying to see that the Church Service preserves the memory of the victims which otherwise would have died out long ago. The Service was very impressive. A man of sense can seriously see a source of inspiration in everything. But this is very easy for a poet, journalist or a writer. He can hold intercourse with the whole universe and communicate with "inert matter" just as he does with "Intelli-

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gence". So the Blessings from the St. John's Church were taken by Heavenly Angels wrapped up in transcendental splendour and glory to the Victims of 1880, in the next world who were all gratefully delighted (to have the spiritual presents) especially the Indian as these had been since 1880, wholly ignored in prayers by their Indian brethren. The Blessings were equally distributed among the Victims Europeans and Indians, for no distinction whatever can be made in Heaven. The Indian Victims however were smarting under a sense of having been entirely forgotten by the Hindu and Mohammadans of Naini Tal. Their leader Mr. Sabir (Mr. Patient) called a meeting at which he himself presided and thus spoke: "I am deeply sensible of the honour you have done me by offering me the presidentship of this conference but most humbly I would request you not to expect from me any falmboyant oration. Mine is a sad task. Eloquence is beyond question. Oratory is impossible. I stand before you only to pour out the effusions of a sorrowful heart. The Hindus and Mohammadans of Naini Tal by having neglected us so long, have evinced a callous disregard to the ordinary dictates of humanity. Our sorrows have at last culminated in the following Resolution:— This meeting of the Indian Victims of 1880 records its most emphatic protest against the negligence of the duty the

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Hindus and Mohammadans of Naini Tal owe to us and further Resolves that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the *Daily* — which has the nerve to voice our genuine feelings and proclaim the truth in blunt and bold language.” To put the whole thing in a nutshell this resolution was carried amid tears. . . .

I must confess that I have never been able to look on the Babu in any light other than as a figure of fun. He is at the same time so silly and so serious. He wears a ridiculous pill-box hat, and he sports the *dhoti*, which is a length of (more or less) white cloth roughly draped to look something like a pair of trousers from the front and like nothing on earth from behind. His sock-suspenders are always visible, he is never seen without an umbrella, and he rides a bicycle. Perhaps there is nothing intrinsically funny in all this; but to me the ensemble is irresistible. Just as music-hall audiences laugh at the bare mention of the name of “Wigan”, so I, despite myself, laugh at the Babu. I feel that no man who wishes to be regarded seriously has the right to go about in the garb and with the properties of a pantomime dame.

But although you may laugh privately, you must treat the Babu with respect. You must address him as “Babu” and not by his name. (By the way, “Babu” means simply “Mister”; and if you can conceive of a European who would prefer to be called “Mister” rather than Smith, Jones, or whatever it may be, it may help you to find a



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standard by which to measure Babu mentality.) You will find even in the lower ranks of your employees people who rejoice in the most awe-inspiring titles, and are punctiliously addressed by them. Khans, Lalas and Pandits abound in the machine-room and among the composing staff. I remember one day being told by one of my *chupprassis* (office messengers) that the *Sirdar Sahib* was waiting to see me, and on telling him to show this august individual in, I found that the Sirdar referred to was my servant!

At last the day came when I could no longer with decency postpone my acceptance of Abdul Aziz's invitation to dinner. I had pondered for some time as to what form of dress would be correct for such an occasion, and had finally decided that from a fellow public-school man Aziz would be sure to expect a dinner-jacket at least. Accordingly I put one on, and I am still doubtful whether this was the right thing or not, for my host, although he had donned a black jacket of dubious cut, still wore the inevitable Jodhpurs. He had assured me that "the Missus" would be overjoyed to greet "the *Sahib Bahadur*", and I must confess to a measure of curiosity as to what his wife would be like. To my surprise, she turned out to be a Japanese, and one of the tiniest women I have ever seen; next to her husband she was almost invisible. She spoke hardly a word of English, and to every remark I addressed to her she replied with a shrill titter and the words

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"thank you very much". I don't think I have ever received so much gratitude, for Heaven knows what imaginary benefits, in one evening before.

However, she was the soul of hospitality, as, indeed, was Aziz also. He was, as I subsequently found out, the sort of man who will share his last shilling with a friend, even if he has to borrow the shilling from another friend in order to do so. He was more than half drunk when I arrived, and as we consumed an entire bottle of whiskey (only fifteen under proof in India) while I was there, the process had been completed by the time I took my departure. I had not been in the house five minutes before he mentioned that he had been to England, and that he was pleased to greet me as a fellow public-school man, and he repeated this admirable sentiment at intervals throughout the evening.

During the evening I learned something of his history. He was, I was surprised to hear, a Hindu by birth. At an early age he had become converted to Christianity, and had adopted the Islamic faith later on, so that he could claim to have had quite remarkably varied spiritual experience. He was now a Mussulman of the Mussulmans, and regarded the Hindus with dislike and contempt. His political views were Pan-Islamic and strongly pro-British. His own stay in England (in which country, he mentioned, he had attended a public school) rendered him in his own eyes vastly superior to those Indians who had not enjoyed this privilege, and it therefore followed that a born Englishman,

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who had spent his life in the home-country, must *a fortiori* be the superior of an Indian. He was the only Indian I have ever met who really held and openly expressed the view that, other things being equal, the Englishman was the Indian's natural superior, and that the dominion of the black races by the white was just, inevitable, and intrinsically *right*. The view is not uncommon among Englishmen, but it was to me a novelty to find an Indian who frankly classed his own countrymen as being of "the lesser breeds without the law".

Naturally there was but little love lost between Abdul Aziz and Ram Lal. Each regarded the other as a traitor, and each distrusted the sincerity of the other's views. In the office, happily for the general peace, they met but little; Aziz dealt mainly with "subbing" and make-up, at which, when he was fairly sober, he was a sound and reliable worker, while Ram Lal was rarely concerned with any member of the staff other than myself. He was at the Legislative Assembly most of the day, and would then return to acquaint me with such news as he had been able to gather in the lobbies, and to advise on and sometimes to write the day's leader. It was the irony of fate that the sentiments actuating Ram Lal's leaders were generally just those that Abdul Aziz favoured but lacked the skill to express.

The strain of producing a column and a half of leaders, as well as notes, comments and so forth every day, was rather a heavy one; but I never thought fit to make use of the ingenious device of a

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colleague of mine on an Indian newspaper who, finding himself on one occasion "stuck" for a leader with only a short time in which to produce one, got over the difficulty by writing: "Thus the *Pioneer* . . ." adding a column and a half of extract from that journal, and concluding with the statement, "We do not agree with our contemporary".

## CHAPTER IV

### JOURNALISTIC AMENITIES

TAKEN on the average, it must be admitted that English newspapers in the East fall a long way behind the standard of those at home. For this there are several reasons. The first and, indeed, the root cause is economic. An Indian newspaper printed in the English language can hope for only a small circulation; four thousand a day is about the figure for a reasonably prosperous paper, and I know of only one that can boast of a five-figure circulation. Since the sale price is the equivalent of a penny, it is clear that revenue from sales cannot be large; and advertisements are accepted at a low rate. It follows, therefore, that both capital and running expenses must be kept at a low level; and unfortunately in journalism, as in most other branches of life, efficiency is generally found to be proportionate to the amount of money that can be spent on an undertaking.

Furthermore, there are certain, relatively rather heavy, expenses incurred by newspapers in the East which are unknown in Fleet Street. At any rate a nucleus of European staff is essential, and this makes heavy inroads into both capital and running costs. The average journalist is to-day a fairly well-paid

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man, and naturally nobody who is assured of a reasonable income at home is going to take the journey to India without more or less substantial financial inducements. An experienced English journalist who accepts an appointment in India will require a more than adequate salary, and possibly free living quarters, "allowances", and so forth. Then there is the matter of his leave to be considered—eight months in every four years, for which period somebody else will have to be engaged—as well as the cost of his passage, and probably half-pay on the journey. Employers in India must reckon on an initial and, of course, unproductive expenditure of at least £100 on every man engaged from home.

These are heavy expenses, particularly when it is borne in mind that a newspaper in the East is often started on a capital of only a few thousand pounds. Clearly economies must be found somewhere. As a rule they are found at the expense of machinery and equipment and of subordinate staff. Many newspapers in India are produced by the old-fashioned and cumbersome method of hand-setting because the expense of linotypes renders them prohibitive; and the majority are printed on out-of-date machines—I believe that the number of rotary machines in India to-day can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Stereo plants are rare, and the average newspaper that desires to print pictures has to send to Calcutta for the blocks to be made. There are no tape machines; news arrives in the form

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of telegrams brought by a leisurely Post Office peon.

As for subordinate staff, I have in the last chapter dealt with some of the difficulties that arise from the employment of Indians and Anglo-Indians in positions for which they are fitted neither by education nor by upbringing. In England proofs are read by Correctors of the Press, men of considerable educational attainments who pass a fairly stiff examination before they are allowed to practise their profession. In India your proof-reader is probably a Babu who has been found too inefficient to keep his place as a clerk on the business side. Newspaper editors in India who are lucky enough to have a sufficiently large European staff always have their final proofs read by a European sub-editor—a procedure that wastes the time of the unfortunate “sub” and nearly drives him to distraction, but has the merit of avoiding many of the worst “gaffes” with which the pages of Indian newspapers are normally disfigured. The junior sub-editors, too, are generally either Indians or Eurasians, and with one or two honourable exceptions have no more than a nodding acquaintance with the niceties of the English language.

It is no wonder that the editor of a newspaper in India needs his home leave every four years, as well as an annual month in the Hills. It is not the climate that wears him out, though that is trying enough; it is the constant strain of carrying through a difficult and arduous task with inadequate

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assistance, of performing a delicate operation with clumsy tools. He spends his life in terror of libel actions, knowing that he cannot possibly scrutinise every line that goes into his paper (though he is of course personally responsible for it) and that half his staff have not the intelligence to recognise a libel if they saw one. He knows—despairingly, for he cannot remedy it—that of every hundred proper names that go into his columns forty will be misspelt. He knows that, unless he himself can find time to watch every item of news that comes into the office, the main story of the day, if it is a European story, will be relegated to a couple of lines on an inner page, simply because his “subs” are too ignorant of European affairs to recognise its importance, and that the lead story will be devoted to a speech by Pandit Malaviya to the Hindu Mahasabha, or to the proceedings of the local Rotary Club. And he knows, too, that unless he is on the spot at the time of going to press, bullying and harassing the Press Superintendent and the machine crews and pestering the make-up men until he is ashamed to look any of them in the face, that that fatal leisureliness characteristic of the East will lead to the missing of two or three trains and a crop of complaints the next day. And so to bed, with the dismal thought that the whole nerve-racking business will begin again the next day.

But there are inherent difficulties in journalism in India, which not even unlimited capital and a lofty indifference to profits on the part of one's



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directors could do away with. The main trouble is that the Indian newspaper must be at the same time national—even international—and parochial; that it must deal adequately and fully with matters of world-wide moment and with local politics, fulfilling at the same time the functions of *The Times* and of a parish magazine. The editor in India is continually measuring events by two standards—their true consequence, and the amount of interest that they are likely to arouse locally. To him negotiations regarding the American Debt may appear of more world-shaking importance than a discussion by the members of the European Association in Calcutta; but which of them will loom larger in the minds of his readers, or (to put the matter more bluntly) which will sell more copies of his paper? My own experience leads me definitely though regretfully to the conclusion that European news (with the exception of the results of Saturday's football matches in England) is of but little value for circulation in India. The inauguration of New Delhi—though only by the misuse of words could it be called “news”—sold more copies than did Britain's decision to go off the gold standard.

Local news, with plenty of “social and personal”, is what sells the papers in India. Every *Sahib Bahadur* who sees his name in print will buy half a dozen copies to distribute among his friends; every speech by a local celebrity that is reported means twenty or thirty more copies. And if you are lucky enough to find some popular local agitation that

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has not yet become fully vocal, if your organ can be the first to voice the widespread demand for a new parish pump or to insist on the stationing of an additional traffic policeman at the main crossroads, why then you are a made man.

Another sound method of circulation-building in India is to stage a controversy with a rival newspaper. The source of the controversy is of relatively little importance; it will soon be lost sight of anyhow. I have seen (and even taken part in) some amazingly virile disputes in Indian journalism; they are carried on for the most part with a truly delightful lack of reticence, reminiscent of Eatanswill at its best. Personalities abound; editors describe each other as "mad dogs", "guttersnipes", and I know not what else, while the most amazing allegations are made regarding their personal characters. I have myself been described by a courteous Indian colleague as a "cowardly assassin hiding behind the skirts (*sic*) of British bayonets"!

A curious feature of journalism in India is the habit that has grown up of dating newspapers ahead. It originated, presumably, from the fact that each newspaper serves a comparatively wide area, and the "Dak" edition, designed for distant stations, does not normally reach them until the day after publication. It therefore became customary for "Dak" newspapers to be post-dated by one day, so that they reached out-stations on the date that was printed on them. This procedure, which may have had something to recommend it, has, however, now

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become so misused that many newspapers post-date even their local editions, and sometimes by as much as two or three days. Presumably this is intended to give the paper an appearance of up-to-dateness; actually, of course, it has a diametrically opposite effect. To read Wednesday's news in a paper dated Friday, even though one actually receives it on Thursday, hardly creates the illusion of freshness; and I remember one of my contemporaries that had earned the reputation of being "the paper that prints yesterday's news with to-morrow's date". But this habit, foolish though it appears, is too deep-rooted to be easily eradicated. I did once try the experiment of dating my paper correctly, but I received so many complaints that it had to be abandoned. Even though the news was equally fresh, I found that it was impossible to sell a paper while other journals with a later (though admittedly spurious) date were available on the same stall.

The Indian owned and run newspaper published in (alleged) English is, as a rule, rather a queer affair, although one or two of them—notably the *Hindu* of Madras and the *Leader* of Allahabad—are sound and workmanlike productions. Generally they can hope for but little in the way of European advertisements, and they depend for most of their revenue on Indian advertising, which is mainly concerned with one of the staple industries of the country, the manufacture of aphrodisiacs. The advertisement columns of an Indian newspaper

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make interesting reading—much more so, very often, than the news columns. Panaceas and cure-alls and particularly aphrodisiacs and remedies for venereal diseases are described with the most surprising lack of reticence and with a *naïveté* that is really amusing. Love potions and talismans of various sorts (*Tavizes*) are also widely offered and, presumably, widely sold. In almost all cases these advertisements include testimonials from satisfied users of the particular commodity that is being extolled. Frequently these make pleasant reading, and it is touching to note the enthusiasm of some grateful Babu who, having passed an examination and secured a Government appointment purely through the magical aid of a *Tavize*, hurries to place his success to the credit of the beneficent mage through whose supernatural assistance he has achieved his desires. Equally effusive is the gratitude of those whose virility has been restored by the practitioners of Ayurvedic medicine; but the majority of these testimonials are hardly quotable.

Every editor in India is obliged by law to include his name in the imprint at the back of his newspaper. This regulation is designed to facilitate the task of the police in taking action against an editor who is to be charged with sedition. Unfortunately, however, the wiles of the Indian editor have rendered this precaution of but little avail. The Indian newspaper is frequently but an ephemeral creature. The *Defence of the Motherland* will appear with a great flourish of trumpets and with a vicious

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attack on the Raj on Monday, will be confiscated on Tuesday, and will reappear as the *Trumpet of Freedom* on Wednesday with a still more bitter onslaught on the "Satanic Government". Meanwhile, whatever sea change the paper may suffer, the editor remains in the background; the name that appears on the imprint is that of some wretched peon or *chupprassi*, probably unable to read or write, who for an extra twenty rupees has consented to accept all the honours of being an editor—including going to prison for sedition.

If the Indian Nationalist editor has always the fear of prison looming on his mental horizon, still he is spared many of the worries that harass the European editor. The latter must indeed "gang warily". He has to be something of a social figure; not for him is the splendid isolation of the better type of London editor, who shelters permanently behind the anonymity of the editorial "we". Everybody knows the editor of an Indian newspaper—his habits, his private address, even the amount of his salary. Should he criticise in the mildest terms any prominent member of the European community, he is sure to meet that member at the Club the same evening, and equally sure to find his criticisms hotly resented. Should he give three lines more to a speech by Mr. X than to an equally important speech by Mr. Y, the gross favouritism that obviously inspired him will be immediately detected and exposed. He will receive totally unsuitable manuscripts from personal acquaintances

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and his rejection of them will be taken as a deliberate insult. He must either do his duty and be disliked or toady to the bigwigs and be despised.

The majority of editors in India choose the latter alternative. There are, of course, exceptions. The editor of the *Statesman* holds a sufficiently influential position to be able to defy hostile comment; but there is no other journal in India that has the prestige of the *Statesman*. The majority of editors dare not offend for fear of the effect on their already tenuous circulations.

In addition to the difficulties entailed by his enforced participation in social life, the European editor in India has other troubles with which to contend. Nearly always he is short of staff—or, at any rate, of efficient and reliable staff—and he will have to work at all sorts of hours, and constantly to be ready for an “emergency call” when he does take a short rest from his duties. Then, too, he must be prepared to accept the Indian idea of what constitutes an emergency. I remember one occasion when, having had no sleep at all for three nights, I was compelled to abandon my duties temporarily to the tender mercies of my principal assistant—a Eurasian, who compensated for his lack of experience with an overbrimming enthusiasm that sometimes rather embarrassed me. Before leaving the office I impressed on this gentleman that should there arise any matter of importance or urgency he must not hesitate to telephone me, when I

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would at once come to his assistance. Then I went home to take my well earned rest.

I had hardly been in bed a couple of hours when I was summoned to the telephone and told my presence was urgently required. Shivering (for in the winter season the nights in Delhi can be cold), I donned jacket and trousers over my pyjamas and drove hurriedly to the office. There I met my assistant, who told me, in righteous indignation, he must report that Mr. Aziz had spoken rudely to him! It was this soul-shattering catastrophe that he had deemed of sufficient urgency to rouse me from the first sleep I had had for three nights.

I dealt with the matter faithfully. I assured my assistant that the rudeness of Mr. Aziz (despite that gentleman's English education) was but a poor, pale thing by the side of the really rich and colourful rudeness of a natural born Englishman. I told him that by the time *I* had been rude to him he would know what rudeness meant. I was then rude. . . . Of course, that gave me some satisfaction; but my night's sleep was ruined just the same.

On another occasion I had promised to attend the annual dance at the Club—one of the big social events of the season. I duly arrived, clad in immaculate evening dress and surrounded (I trust) with an aura of dignity suitable to my position and to the occasion. But I had hardly spent sufficient time at the bar to thaw and to renew old acquaintances when I received a telephone message from a frantic "sub" to the effect that there had been a

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break-down in the machine-room.

There was no more merry-making for the harassed editor. In five minutes I was back at work, supervising the putting to rights of the machines. My technical knowledge of machinery, by the way, is infinitesimal; but nobody who has lived in the East will need to be told that the presence of a white man—however rudimentary his qualifications—is essential to the carrying out of any “rush job”.

The break-down proved more obstinate than we had expected, and eight o'clock in the morning found me still in the machine-room—my tail-coat drooping woefully, my eyes red and inflamed, and my once well-starched dress-shirt a crumpled rag. In this state, dirty and depressed, I returned forlornly home—and had the greatest difficulty in convincing passing acquaintances that I was not a belated and drunken reveller from the ball. I had never felt less like revelling in my life.

Nor do his normal routine duties and his social obligations exhaust the tasks that fall to the lot of the European editor in India. He is, in addition, expected to be a sort of walking encyclopædia; he bears on his fevered brow the slogan: “Enquire within on everything”. To the editor come queries of every possible description on every conceivable subject, as well as a constant and never ending flow of complaints. If a “small ad.” is misspelt, this is evidence of criminal neglect on the editor's part; if the paper arrives late at a particular out-station, that is because the editor is



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venting his personal spite against the European population there. And the remonstrances he receives are by no means limited to matters over which he can, by the wildest stretch of imagination, be supposed to have any control. I have received the most bitter complaints, accompanied by demands that I should take instant action, in reference to the administration of the Indian Railways, the methods employed by the Census officials, the decisions of the Delhi Municipality, and even the entirely personal activities of private individuals. Some of my correspondents, I am sure, felt that I was guilty of the gravest dereliction of duty because I declined to play the part of a beneficent providence and undertake altogether the conduct of their private and professional activities.

One anxious seeker after truth, I remember, addressed me as the "Prime Steward of the Printing House". He would indeed need to be a prime steward who would undertake all the tasks that were brought to me so confidently.

Even the editor in India who keeps on the very best of terms with the European community has his dangers to face. To stress the pro-British point of view is to incur the enmity of the more militant of the Nationalists, and these gentry are apt to evince their displeasure in ways even more drastic than social ostracism. As Sir Alfred Watson has reason to know, the knife and the revolver are arguments sometimes used by Indian malcontents to express their disapproval of an editor's literary style. Nor

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s this a new departure. As far back as 1928, when I was in Delhi, the terrorists were active in this respect. Shortly after the murder of Mr. Saunders, a police officer of Lahore, I myself received one of the so-called "red letters" that were then being broadcast, informing me that I had forty-eight hours to live. Prior to his assassination Mr. Saunders had received a similar letter, signed by one "Balraj, Commander-in-Chief of the Hindustan Socialist-Republican Army"; and as the communication addressed to me purported to bear the signature of the same public-spirited gentleman, the threat seemed as if it might be something more than the usual crop of anonymous abuse that helps to fill every editor's waste-paper basket. As will be clear to the sympathetic reader, Mr. Balraj's cheerful prophecy was not fulfilled; but he was responsible for giving me a very unpleasant three weeks. The unpleasantness was not solely due to my own fears, though I cannot pretend that I regarded with any active pleasure the prospect that there might be an armed assassin concealed behind every bush that I passed. Despite certain inward tremors, I endeavoured to maintain the dignity and prestige of the Raj; and I rather resented the highly-coloured account published in an Indian contemporary, which regarded my views with abhorrence, describing how I was skulking in my house, afraid to leave it, and guarded by several regiments of soldiers. This was, to put it at its lowest, an inaccuracy. I had, however, a police escort consisting of two

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plain-clothes men, both Indians, who had received instructions never to let me out of their sight, and who carried out their orders with a literal exactitude which I hope embarrassed them as much as, on occasion, it embarrassed me. For the improbability of Mr. Balraj being concealed in my bathroom or other even more private apartments of my household seemed to them no excuse for an even momentary dereliction of duty on their part, and it was only after arguments, threats and I know not what entreaties that they would allow me to perform in private those functions for which a man is least desirous of an audience—and then I had to travel under arms.

I have never met two men more painfully conscientious than those policemen were. I pointed out to them that if Mr. Balraj were really intent on my demise no power on earth could prevent him from achieving it, since it would not be until after he had discharged his lethal weapon that they would know his identity. This did not, however, impress them as a reason for relaxing their vigilance in any degree; and it was gradually borne in upon me (somewhat to my humiliation) that the main reason for the alertness of my guards lay not so much in the desire to safeguard my valuable life as in the ambition to make a really spectacular arrest *after* I had been duly dispatched. However, three weeks passed without any sign of hostilities on the part of the Socialist-Republican Army, other than a mysterious puncture of one of the tyres of my car

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which occupied the attention of the best brains of the Indian C.I.D. for some days without result, and ultimately my escort was withdrawn and I was left to face the menace of the assassin alone. By this time I had ceased to be very apprehensive, and the departure of my too efficient watchers made me feel like a schoolboy on holiday.

I often regretted, though, that Balraj allowed the thing to peter out so tamely. Out of the original threat I had made a front-page story which (though I say it myself) was really quite effective, and had written an impassioned and soul-stirring leader on the subject, mentioning, if I remember rightly, that the peril of the assassin's knife would never deflect us from the path of duty—a sentiment that was quoted with approval by the editors of several of my contemporaries who had not received any threats but were equally heroic in defying such hypothetical menaces as might be made. I could not help thinking what a magnificent story it would make if I were really to be murdered, coupled with the melancholy reflection that I should not be able to write it up myself and that there was nobody else in the office whom I could trust to attend to the job in the way I wanted it done. I did go so far as to prepare, in case of emergencies, an obituary notice, couched in terms which I considered neither fulsome nor over-modest. But alas! it was a wasted effort; Balraj let me down. Indians are notoriously unreliable.

I have before referred to the constant strain to

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which the fear of libel actions exposes every editor in India. I was myself fortunate, inasmuch as proceedings for libel were taken against me only once, and then were abandoned before the matter came into court. The episode was amusing and not altogether uninstructional. It concerned one Bhagat Singh, a young Indian revolutionary of the more dangerous type. Well educated, a patriot and an idealist according to his lights, he had joined the ranks of the terrorists, and was fully prepared to sacrifice his own life if in the course of doing so he could, by murder or any other means, express India's dissatisfaction with the "Satanic Government". He first came into prominence when, with another young man, he was charged with having thrown bombs in the Legislative Assembly. Bhagat Singh was convicted of this offence and sentenced to transportation for life; but the execution of the sentence was postponed so that he might stand his trial for complicity in the Lahore Conspiracy. (On this latter charge, by the way, he was found guilty and subsequently hanged.)

It was while Bhagat Singh and a number of others were being tried, on the second charge, at Lahore, that the incident that caused the libel occurred. As usually happens when several Indians are being jointly charged, a number of them turned approver (the Indian equivalent for King's Evidence). I received from my correspondent in Lahore a list of those who had done so, and, by an error, the name of Bhagat Singh was included. Naturally

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I had no reason to suspect that the message was incorrect, and it duly appeared in the paper. Some time afterwards I received a communication from Bhagat Singh's legal representative, whom I happened to know personally, informing me that he was instructed to take action against me for this cruel aspersion on his client's character. At first I thought this must be a joke. It seemed impossible to me that any jury would award damages to a plaintiff whose character had already been damaged by revelations at the two trials at Delhi and at Lahore to such an extent that the allegation that he was an approver could hardly matter one way or the other. But on consulting my own lawyer I was soon undeceived.

Bhagat Singh, it appeared, was a hero and a martyr. My lawyer, being a lawyer, could not bring himself to approve of actions that were forbidden by statute; but while condemning the act he praised the actor. All over India similar sentiments were being expressed, and by the most responsible leaders. And this national figure I had (although, he admitted, in good faith) described as a mean, sneaking approver, one who had gone back on his principles *to help the Government*. I did not believe my lawyer; I consulted other Indian friends of mine. One and all, they agreed that my position was a serious one, and that a verdict for Bhagat Singh was a certainty. It was my friend Ram Lal who put the thing to me with brutal clearness.

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“Bhagat Singh will win his case,” he told me. “Your contention that a man who has already been convicted of bomb-throwing and is now being tried on a capital charge has a character so bad that it cannot be damaged by the comparatively innocuous allegation that he is an approver would never be admitted by an Indian jury—or, for that matter, by an Indian judge. The point you are missing is this. Had you described Bhagat Singh as a murderer, you would doubtless have been charged with contempt of court, but never with libel. Bhagat Singh would not have minded; he *is* a murderer. He intended to commit murder, he does not regret an action which has won him nation-wide affection and esteem, and he will pay the death penalty willingly, knowing that he has won a permanent place on the roll of martyrs that India honours. But you have suggested that he did something to assist the Government. You must never accuse a Swarajist of that. He might forgive the imputation of any other crime in the calendar, but never that of being what Singh and his friends consider to be a traitor. No, my friend,” said Ram Lal in conclusion, “had Bhagat Singh in fact turned approver, it would have been the one act in his life that could have been commendable in Western eyes, and it would have been the one act that would definitely have damned him in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen. It is the most serious libel against a Nationalist that could be uttered. For Bhagat Singh to turn approver would have been

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an even more hideous sacrilege than it is for me to work for your detestable paper. Come to some arrangement with his lawyer, otherwise you will find yourself in for thumping damages as well as a wiggling from the judge.”

I took Ram Lal's advice. I met Bhagat Singh's lawyer at the Club, and through him I tendered to that convicted felon my heartfelt apologies for a cruel and unwarranted slur upon his spotless character. Whereupon we had a drink and the matter ended. But the whole episode was one upon which I feel that only a Gilbert could comment adequately.

There have been some strange periodicals published in India and elsewhere; but I think that one of the strangest must be a weekly newspaper that enjoyed a brief but hectic career in Delhi during my stay there, and that was first published under the alluring title of *The Prostitutes' Paper*. Its genesis was as follows. In 1928 the local authorities of Delhi passed a regulation whereby all the houses of accommodation in the city were to be confined to one particular quarter—round about the Chauri Bazar. This regulation was hotly resented by the Delhi prostitutes, a numerous and well-organised body, and a public meeting of protest was held at a local café. This meeting was attended by the famous Mumtaz Begum, speeches were made, a fund was raised, and it was decided that a newspaper should be started to put before the public the views and the just demands of those ladies who had done and were doing so much for its solace and general



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welfare. The paper was actually launched and was publicly sold. The police, apparently, raised no objection, except that they found the title a little too outspoken, and after the first edition of the paper subsequent issues appeared under the title (certainly the work of some subtle humourist) of *The New Bride*. It was published in the vernacular, but I had the first editorial translated for my information and edification. It traced the history of prostitution in India, referred to the fact that it had always been regarded as a useful and honourable profession, and pointed out that the practice by ladies of pleasure of their avocation constituted an invaluable safeguard for women who desired to preserve their chastity. Would it not be better, asked *The New Bride*, if the leaders of the community, instead of desiring to expel the prostitutes from their midst, should rather encourage young men to visit brothels, where they would be taught by experienced women the technique of sexuality instead of indulging in the amateurish, hit-or-miss methods of those fitted neither by education nor by upbringing for the initiation of the novice into the most ancient and the most necessary of the arts?

I was sorry when *The New Bride*, after but one short month of existence, passed into the limbo of extinct newspapers. It seemed to me that its originality and the trenchant force of its editorials had entitled it to a better fate. But it was not to be, and the oldest of all professions remains, so far as I know, unrepresented in the Fourth Estate.

## CHAPTER V

### SOCIAL LIFE AMONG EUROPEANS

WE have to a large extent organised political and administrative affairs in India on the Western model, and, perhaps in compensation, we have adopted the main principles of the Hindu social organisation in the structure of social life among Europeans resident in the country. This is no very remarkable phenomenon; East is East and West is West, and when the two do meet they generally manage to learn from each other. It is unfortunate that the less desirable characteristics of each seem to be the more easily acquired.

The caste system among the Hindus is so inconsistent with Western democratic ideals as to be almost incomprehensible to the European. The mere facts, the bare bones of the system, are easily enough understood, but the spirit that animates it is one so remote from our own ideas as to render it hardly intelligible. That the son of a cobbler should be brought up to be a cobbler and that his marriage with the daughter of a soldier should be considered a misalliance we can appreciate; all that is parallel to a system that prevailed once in England and of which vestiges are still left. But in India it is carried to a degree that must appear to us fantastic. In

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India the descendants of the cobbler must *always* be cobblers by caste; nothing—neither the lapse of time, personal prowess, nor even the acquisition of wealth—will ever put them on a social equality with the descendants of the warrior. As between the caste system in India and social inequality in England there is more than a difference of degree; there is the root difference that in the East money is powerless to make a gentleman. At home a sufficiency of money will work the miracle in two generations. In India the wealthy tradesman would never dream of hoping that his descendants may one day acquire social equality with those of the most poverty-stricken Brahman mendicant.

They say that the caste system is dying out in India. Of course it is not. It is only that, to the superficial observer, its working is less apparent. In the streets of Bombay it is impossible for the untouchable always to avoid stepping in the shadow of the Brahman; but in the villages and the smaller towns, and particularly in Madras, he must still do so, on pain of the most rigorous penalties. The caste system will endure as long as Hinduism endures; and even were there any chance of its being discarded by the Hindus, the system is sure of perpetuation by Europeans in India.

In Hinduism there are four main castes—priests, warriors, traders and agriculturists, and labourers. There are literally thousands of smaller castes and sub-divisions of caste, but those four are all that need be taken into consideration by any but those

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who contemplate an exhaustive study of the subject. Among Europeans in India corresponding divisions may be observed. Our Indian Civil Servants—the aristocracy of the *Sahiblog*—constitute a parallel with the Brahmans, the priestly caste. They have taken no vow of poverty; indeed, they are normally fairly well provided for; but the prestige in which they are held is in no way dependent on their incomes. The European trader in India may make money, but he will never attain or even aspire to social equality with the Civil Servant. There is not, so far as I know, any enactment that debars the European trader from stepping in the shadow of the I.C.S. man; but such an action, I feel, would hardly be considered good form. (It would be interesting, by the way, to make a comparative analysis of caste among the Indians and good form among the English.)

The warrior caste among Europeans in India is not immeasurably below the priestly caste. Some degree of social intercourse is permitted, and even inter-marriage between the two castes is allowed. The warrior caste, by the way, includes all holders of commissioned rank in the Indian Army and Air Force, together with their women-folk. Warrant officers and non-commissioned officers are socially on a par with tradesmen, while European privates are classed with the workers.

The European trader in India is parallel with the *Vaishya*. This is a large and comprehensive class, with many sub-divisions. Fairly high in the social

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scale stand professional men, such as barristers and solicitors (doctors are normally in one of the two superior castes). Planters are also well thought of, although, as their work is generally done "out in the blue", they take but little part in social life. Wholesale traders are, of course, socially superior to retail traders, while those who deal in jute are (I know not why) held in low esteem. The trader must not personally serve customers (unless he deals in motor-cars). To do so would entail his degradation to the fourth caste of *Sudras* (workers).

The *Sudras* include private soldiers, shop assistants, mechanics and so forth. They are debarred from club-life, except such as is afforded by the local Railway Institute or the Y.M.C.A., and they not infrequently mix with domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians. These latter comprise the *déclassés*, the European "untouchables", with whose position I shall deal in a later chapter.

It may be said that the social distinctions I have described above exist, *mutatis mutandis*, in England, and that the analogy with caste that I have tried to draw is a fanciful one, based on mere geographical proximity. But social differentiation among Europeans in India, as a matter of fact, lies far deeper than any corresponding discrimination at home. Here the acquisition of money will do a great deal to raise a man in the social scale; many successful tradesmen have reached the House of Lords, and their children are not debarred from

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any profession or from any social position attainable by a commoner. In India this does not apply. One comes out to India in one of the four castes, and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, one remains in that caste. No matter how much money the European *Vaishya* may make, nothing will transform him to a warrior or a priest. It is, indeed, possible that his son may rise to one of the higher castes; but only by being sent home to England, achieving the transformation there, and coming out to India as the fully-fledged article. Not by entering the Civil Service in India will he attain to the ranks of the Twice-Born.

The European Club is the centre of social life in every station in India—for women as well as for men. There is still a good deal of entertaining—indeed, one “drops cards” on all one’s own caste as soon as one arrives in the station, and invitations to dinner follow as a natural course. But with the economies necessitated by post-war conditions, this custom is gradually falling into desuetude; and the Club affords almost the only convenient general meeting-place. There was a time, in the “good old days”, when only priests and warriors were admitted to the Club membership; but nowadays the *Vaishya* can get in without any difficulty (though he may have to put up with an occasional snub), and an individual *Sudra*—looking and feeling somewhat uncomfortable—may put in an appearance. I have even known the hallowed precincts of the Club to be desecrated by the hated accents of *chi-chi*. The

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old *qui-hais* regretfully admit that "the country is not what it was, sir".

As a general rule, however, the Club preserves the colour bar with all its old stringency. European residents in India, both male and female, visit the better-class Indians and entertain them socially. But the Club is for Europeans only. An exception may be made for a Ruling Prince who has presented a cup for the tennis tournament; but this is definitely an exception and may not be construed as a precedent.

Social life plays a much more important part in a man's career in India than it does in the West. At home if a man does his work properly and conducts himself with reasonable propriety while he is doing that work, nobody bothers about the way he may be occupying his leisure hours. He may live in Park Lane or in Hackney; he may dress for dinner every night, or he may take his evening meal in the kitchen, clad in his shirt-sleeves; he may book a stall at the theatre, or he may stand in a queue for the "gods". So long as he steers clear of the police and does not too outrageously offend public opinion, it is nobody's business but his own. In India this happy freedom is unattainable. Everybody knows your address; it must be a good address. You must dress every evening if you wish to retain the respect even of your bearer. You must keep a car, you must entertain, you must be "in the swim". And all of this will cost you money.

The position is not quite so bad in Delhi and the

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Mofussil as in Calcutta. There one must be in receipt of a colossal salary to be able to support life at all. There is no choice in the matter. It is not only that a man would be miserable if he were unable to take any part in club life and were thrown upon his own resources for all his amusements. Even if he were willing to put up with this deprivation he would not be allowed to do so. The young man going out to Calcutta will often find a provision in his contract to the effect that he must live in the district of Park Street and that he must belong to one or two of the principal clubs. That is all very well in its way. Park Street is what the house-agent would describe, with accuracy, as being "eminently desirable", and membership of at least one club is almost a necessity. But the newcomer to India does not realise how much all this is going to cost. He translates his salary into English money at the rate of one-and-sixpence to the rupee, sees that he will be in receipt of more money than he has ever earned before, and fancies that all will be well. He has no idea of the appalling cost of living in India; nobody has told him that not one in twenty of the men who go out to take up junior appointments in Calcutta is able to live on his salary, and that the Marwari moneylender, seeking his monthly instalment, is a frequent visitor to the handsome flats in Park Street.

There are two ways in which the high cost of living in India hits the European. Almost everything he buys will cost him more, and he will have



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to buy all sorts of things the necessity for which would never occur to him at home. In London a clerk in a wholesale house can live where he likes, and will as a rule live in a boarding-house where he will pay a couple of guineas a week. In Calcutta he will pay at least as much for his rooms alone and have to cater for himself on top of that. Also he will need servants, who, while not highly paid individually, tend to increase in number until they become a not inconsiderable item in the budget. In England, if he belongs to a club at all it will be the local tennis club, with an annual subscription of perhaps two guineas. In India he is sure to belong to two clubs; each of them will charge him a subscription and an entrance fee, and at each of them he will have a heavy monthly account for drinks, even though he himself may consume but little. If he goes to a cinema his seat will cost him half-a-guinea; to patronise the cheaper seats would probably entail the loss of his job. He must have dozens of tropical suits, which, being constantly drenched in sweat and subjected to the ministrations of the *dhobi*, will be continually demanding renewal. If he is in an out-station he must run a car, and he will need a *syce*. He must take exercise, and every form of exercise (except walking, which is taboo) entails more expenditure. Unless his income is at least three times what he is used to at home he is bound to get into debt. He will probably get into debt anyway.

One thing that assists the unwary to get into

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financial difficulties in India is the iniquitous "chit system". Nobody ever pays cash for anything. Even when you go into an hotel lounge for a drink (there are, alas! no "pubs" in the country) you sign a chit for the amount. You never need any money at all in India until the end of the month, when a *chupprassi* staggers to your door almost overburdened with the weight of the chits you have signed during the month, and you find that your salary is lamentably inadequate to discharge all these obligations. For it is a distressing fact that the man who buys on credit can never realise what he is paying as well as he who is actually disbursing hard cash. The chit system, I fear, will never be done away with in India. It is undoubtedly a convenience—though perhaps only temporarily so—to the impecunious; and everybody who arrives in India is impecunious. We all spend too much on board ship, and we all have to borrow something when we land to discharge our last week's bar bills. Then there is no money coming until the end of the month, and the first month in a new country is bound to be expensive. There is a variety of tropical kit to be bought; one must stay a few days at least in an hotel before one's permanent diggings are fixed up; one must spend a certain amount of money on getting on good terms with one's colleagues. Without the chit system all this would be hardly possible. Thus at the end of the first month the financial position is already acute. One decides that during succeeding months one will draw in one's

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horns. But somehow those horns never do get drawn in. One arranges for a small overdraft, gets a little advance from the office, smoothes matters over temporarily, and resolves on a campaign of strict economy for the future. At the end of each succeeding month one goes through the same procedure.

The root cause of the whole miserable business is the snobbery with which the whole of European society in India is tainted. Every man must live on a scale which the man above him can hardly afford. The clerk must meet the manager socially, and must entertain with the same lavishness as does his superior. The manager will be on visiting terms with the *burra sahib* himself, and must spend his money, or pledge his credit, accordingly. Even the *burra sahib* will have business relations with the financial magnates of the jute world, and however much he may despise them, will feel obliged to disburse vast sums of money in order to show that he himself can live on the same scale as they. All this deceives no-one; but it goes on, and nothing less than a social revolution will stop it. Certainly no individual can do anything in the matter. To attempt to cut down one's expenditure to any appreciable extent would only lead to one's being considered mean, and might in many cases lead to the loss of one's job.

In Delhi the situation is less difficult in this respect than in Calcutta. It is not a commercial centre, so that there are no really very wealthy

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residents, added to which there is a period—during the hot weather when the “official” element moves to Simla—in which there is really no social life at all. Despite the misery of the sweltering heat of the plains in the summer months, the hot weather was always, for this reason, my favourite season. One has many other annoyances, but one has at any rate a respite from the dreary social round. For months on end the shade temperature hovers round the 120 mark; the “loo” (a hot wind from the desert) makes the least breath of air only an added torment; and during the monsoons the insects drive a man to distraction. But in the evenings, when the day’s work is done and one can laze in any sort of costume on one’s verandah, comparatively cool, and with a well-iced *chota peg* at one’s hand, there are compensations. Definitely there are compensations.

## CHAPTER VI

### PERSONALIA

THERE is perhaps no individual in India who can do more to alleviate or to intensify the discomforts of the European's existence than his bearer. Your bearer—who is a combination of valet, messenger, butler, wine-steward, secretary, guide, philosopher and friend—is as inseparable from you as your shadow, and far more necessary. He will accompany you wherever you go, and, if you have the good fortune to strike an efficient member of the species, he will smoothe over life's difficulties in a really miraculous manner. If you go on a railway journey, your bearer will transport your luggage to the station, tip the coolies, find you a lower berth, and lay out your bedding on it. If you stay at an hotel, you will get no attention from the hotel staff—even your bed will not be made unless your bearer attends to it. There are no bells; without a bearer you might shout yourself hoarse for a drink without getting one. But your bearer—let me say again, if you have a good one—is omnipresent, ever useful, ever accommodating. You pay him perhaps thirty rupees a month, out of which princely sum he feeds himself—how I know not—as well as his (usually numerous) family. If you are in an hotel you will

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pay a trifle for his accommodation; otherwise he will occupy one of the huts in your compound. Most of the day he will squat at the door of your room, ready to shuffle off his shoes and enter at your call (no bearer would be guilty of the insolence of coming into the Sahib's room other than bare-foot). He will lay out your clothes in the morning, tie your shoelaces, dress you if you wish. He will be courteous and respectful, and he will never want a day off. He is, for the bachelor, a ready-made, complete and perfect solution to the servant problem.

An inefficient bearer can, I am told, render his employer's life a hell. Happily I have no first-hand knowledge of the subject. I had but one bearer all the time I was in India, and I never ceased to wonder at his virtues. First and foremost, he was decorative. He was a magnificent-looking man, well over six foot, a Rajput and an old soldier. His breast was covered with medals, and his moustache was of such splendid proportions that the day after I appointed him I decided to shave off my own insignificant growth. In his white clothes, topped by a magnificent *pugree*, he overshadowed me completely. But I felt no jealousy; I was content to bask in his reflected glory.

My bearer was not satisfied merely to discharge the orders I gave him. He took a pride and a pleasure in my personal appearance; he liked to see me well turned out. And as time went on he came to exercise a benevolent despotism over me. I loathe flowers in my button-hole, and for a time I

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struggled against my bearer's insistence that I must wear them. But he overcame, or rather ignored, all resistance, and ultimately I submitted without further protest to making my daily journey to the office crushed under the weight of a veritable bouquet of tropical blooms. He selected the suits I was to wear, and saw to the replenishing of my wardrobe when he considered that it needed replenishing. He exercised a censorship over my visitors, and denied access to those callers whom he judged I might not wish to see. I became dependent on him for everything; but I gloried in my slavery; I hugged my chains.

There were two things that won me my bearer's devotion. One was his discovery that, like himself, I had been a soldier. The other was the fact that I was instrumental in getting for him the medal he had earned in some campaign that took place while I was in the nursery. After this I verily believe he would have given his life for me. I know, at any rate, that during the "Red Letter" scare he slept every night outside my bedroom, and if Balraj had put in an appearance I believe my bearer would have given him a rougher passage than my two police guards put together.

My bearer was not always able wholeheartedly to approve of my conduct. I have known him, when he suspected me of intending to have a "thick night", to confiscate all my money, and when I demanded some to explain that he could find only one ten-rupee note. I knew this to be a lie, and I knew that

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my money would be forthcoming to the last anna the next morning. But what could I do? When I expostulated he swam far out of my depth into floods of voluble Hindustani, repeating every now and then, "Sahib, not got it money." Nor would he ever reprove me the next morning. When he came to call me and I greeted him with feeble curses, he would answer, more in sorrow than in anger, "Sahib take it too much whiskey. No good." And the Sahib was constrained to admit ruefully that he *had* taken it too much whiskey and that it *was* no good.

Nothing in this world is perfect; and even my bearer had one fault. That was his complete confidence in the efficacy of his rather sketchy knowledge of English. It is a strange fact that no Indian will ever reply to a question by saying "What is that?" or "I don't understand". Rather than submit to the humiliation of confessing that his English is unequal to any emergency he will make a wild guess at your meaning, and bring whatever he thinks you may want. My bearer was subject to this amiable weakness, and it has led to many a misunderstanding. I recall one occasion when, feeling a desire for a brandy and ginger-ale, I told him to bring me a horse's neck (that being the generic name for this beverage in India). With his usual imperturbability he replied, "*Atcha*, Sahib", and returned to my door some minutes later leading, with honest pride, a *tonga*-pony! To be on the safe side he had brought me the whole horse!



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Other servants are often less satisfactory than the bearer; and the *dhobi* (washerman) is not one whom I was ever able to regard with any affection. The *dhobi* has one merit; he is cheap. He does his washing by contract, at the rate of nine or ten rupees a month, and the amount of washing that has to be done in a tropical climate is considerable. The resident in India who comes home and scans the prices of an English laundry is liable to get a shock. But the *dhobi's* methods fail to inspire the European with confidence. His way of washing a shirt is to stand in the river, soak the shirt, and then to beat it violently against a flat stone. When it is added that the Jumna, on which Delhi stands, is a sacred river, and is used by the pious Hindu for every conceivable purpose—bodily ablutions, receiving the ashes of departed relatives, tooth-cleaning, and other duties of personal hygiene too delicate to mention—it is not surprising that the Sahib tends to look on his apparently well-laundered dress shirt as a whited sepulchre. There is a skin disease known as *dhobi's* itch, the nature of which can be gathered from its name; but one has no choice but to risk this. You must either patronise the *dhobi* (and shut your eyes every time you cross the Jumna) or else you must go dirty.

The bachelor who lives in an hotel need concern himself with no servants other than the bearer and the *dhobi*; but for those who set up housekeeping in a bungalow the servant problem is indeed a serious one. Bearer and *dhobi* you must have, as

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well as an *ayah* if there are children in the family. For the rest of your household staff, you will find that caste raises many complications. This man may not touch meat unless he subsequently goes through an elaborate process of purification; that one would lose caste if he were to clear up the slops in the bath-room. As a result, the work that could be done by one energetic general servant at home has to be shared between six or eight able-bodied men. You must have a cook, and a cook's boy to wash up the plates. You will need a *khitmutgar* to wait at table, and a *chupprassi* to take your messages. You must have a house-boy to sweep the rooms, and an "untouchable", known as the *mehta*, to perform those duties which the rather inadequate sanitary arrangements in India render necessary. In fact, without any tendency to extravagance or ostentation, if you set up housekeeping in India you will find yourself committed to a really princely retinue of servants. To avoid the inconvenience and expense of all this, I lived in hotels for most of my time in the country.

In an Indian hotel one can have some measure of privacy. I had my own room in which I could entertain my friends, and Ram Lal would frequently drop round to tell me his sorrows over a before-dinner *chota peg*. I lent him a sympathetic ear, for I was not myself so violently anti-Nationalist as were those who controlled the policy of my paper. I learned much from Ram Lal. He had for years been behind the scenes in Indian politics, and had

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but few illusions left as to the honesty or disinterestedness of the members of any of the political parties. Gandhi he venerated, and he had the highest respect for the Nehrus, both the late Motilal Nehru, then the leading figure in the Congress Party, and his son Jawarharlal, a fire-brand who spent most of his time in jail as a political prisoner.

Another friend of mine, Dr. Ahmad Hussein, shared Ram Lal's political views in so far as they were both enthusiastic supporters of the Congress, and each of them bitterly hated my paper while contributing to its columns. Yet, despite the fact that they were both Nationalists and both thoroughly good fellows, there was an underlying animosity between them that not infrequently blazed into open hostility. For Hussein was a Mussulman and Ram Lal was a Brahman—a Hindu of the Hindus. Between such contrasting types I really believe a sincere and unreserved friendship to be impossible. To each of them I, although a representative of the hated Raj, seemed less alien than the other.

Ahmad Hussein was in many ways a remarkable man. The son of a Peshawar merchant, he had been educated in England, and, though still in the early thirties, had obtained several degrees. He was a Master of Arts, a Bachelor of Science and of Law, and a Doctor of Philosophy. He had also a degree in psychology (he was an ardent Freudian) and acted as a sort of unofficial practitioner in psychoanalysis—I believe with considerable success. He

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had been called to the bar in England, but did not practise the legal profession. He was hoping for the Chair of Psychology at one of the Universities; but the Mohammedan Universities are few in number, and he frequently complained to me that a Muslim, whatever his qualifications, has but the slenderest chance of an appointment at a Hindu University.

Anything less like the academic type than Ahmad Hussein I have never seen. He was a little, dark, chubby man, curiously naïve and childlike in manner, fond of a drink and of a "good time", and the soul of generosity. He was, too, extraordinarily susceptible to feminine charm, and would assure me regularly every few weeks, with the most touching sincerity, that he had at last met the one woman who would ever matter to him. The Doctor was notably catholic in his tastes, for three of the ladies who captured his heart and whom I happened to meet were respectively a Mohammedan, a Hindu, and a European. There is, of course, no reason why a Doctor of Philosophy and a psychoanalyst who is still reasonably young should be less subject to the weaknesses of the flesh than any other man; but it always struck me as anomalous and even faintly humorous that one who could diagnose with such masterly precision and even split into its component parts the power we call, according to our tastes, love or sexual attraction, should yet display unashamed its most ridiculous symptoms. The Doctor would quite freely admit this seeming contradiction; but, as he pointed out, the injunction,

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“Physician, heal thyself”, is not found in any scientific work. But despite these minor eccentricities, pardonable in a scientist of no mean achievements, Hussein was the pleasantest of companions. I have never known him to be in an ill-humour, except when discussing with Ram Lal the thorny problem of separate electorates, and on one occasion when my friend the Colonel in an unguarded moment, and under the influence of rather too many *chota pegs*, made a thoughtless and unintentional reference to “niggers”.

The remark was by no means characteristic of the Colonel, who was one of the kindest of men. But unhappily he was not of those who can consume unlimited amounts of alcohol without apparent effect. On the contrary, a relatively small quantity was always sufficient to render the Colonel a little woolly-minded and to loosen his tongue, and on such occasions he was liable to forget the (doubtless unreasonable) susceptibilities of his audience. He was always abjectly apologetic immediately afterwards, and his apologies were so obviously heartfelt that he who could refuse to accept them must have been indeed implacable.

Despite his years, for he was older than I, the Colonel always seemed to me to be a sort of eager adolescent, whom I felt it my duty to protect from the sharp corners of this world of reality. He was so full of outworn enthusiasms, of faded ideals, of more than mediaeval chivalry. To him every woman was the incarnation of the ideal, virginal,

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unapproachable. He had this idea even of the most notorious lights-of-love among the *déclassées* of Delhi, and neither argument nor plain demonstration would convince him of his error. I liked the Colonel, and he liked me, although I fear he thought me a trifle "cynical".

It was the Colonel, too, whom I had to thank for my first visit to an "official" tea-party. He held a Government post, and he took me on one occasion to an out-station where a colleague of his was being installed in a similar office. I enjoyed that tea-party; it was my first taste of greatness, even though it was only greatness at second-hand, reflected from the exalted company in which I found myself. We were greeted with cheers, fireworks and a scouts' band. We took our places under an awning, and then, amid the plaudits of the multitude, the Great Man, accompanied by Mrs. Great Man, arrived. They both shook hands with me. Mr. and Mrs. Great Man were hung with enormous garlands of flowers, and all the other Europeans had smaller garlands. I had one too. Then the scouts' band played again. I really did admire that scouts' band. There were not many of them, and they had not a very good selection of instruments; but with the means at their disposal they seemed to make the maximum of noise. Certainly they appeared to know only two tunes, one of them faintly reminiscent of "We won't go home till morning" and the other like nothing on earth; but by the ingenious expedient of playing them alternately they produced a

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pleasing impression of variety. In the intervals of the music they chewed *pan* with the unconcern characteristic of the true artist. Then there was a group photograph of the Great Man and the Distinguished Visitors (including me), with a background of *chupprassis*, lower-grade Government employees, the band, and a miscellaneous throng of spectators. It was all very impressive, and calculated to inculcate respect for the Raj in the mind of the native. But I wish I didn't feel such a fool in a garland. My appearance is not sufficiently Bacchic to carry it off successfully.

Another occasion on which I tasted the sweets of greatness was when my friend Hussein took a trip to Aligarh to lecture to the University students there, and invited me to go with him. We dined with most of the Faculty, and our meal, although our hosts were followers of Islam, was washed down with that liquor of which the Koran is supposed to disapprove. Possibly under this grateful influence, I thawed and (I fear) became mildly autobiographical. I suffered for it later. I was invited to take a seat on the platform, and when the senior Professor present rose to introduce Hussein to the students, he at the same time took the opportunity of introducing their distinguished guest, the famous journalist, writer and scholar—myself! The thing took me by surprise, and I have rarely been more hideously embarrassed. He went on and on—every dinner-table confidence I had indulged in was brought into that terrible speech,

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and in his peroration he actually referred to my "distinguished military career" (some two years' service as a private). At the conclusion he drew me, blushing and dishevelled, to the front of the platform and insisted that *I* must make a speech. I don't know what I told those Aligarh students; I can only hope it did them no harm. At any rate, they received me with tumultuous applause—I fear I quite spoiled poor Hussein's opening. But he forgave me.

Another more humble friend of mine was a clerk in our counting-house who was continually pestering the *burra sahibs* to dine with him. At last it became impossible to refuse any longer, and our business manager and I accepted for the same evening. We started off with no very lively anticipations, and as our car threaded the alley-ways of the bazar we became positively apprehensive. At length we stopped before a grim-looking building which rather resembled an Oriental Bastille. It was unlit and the courtyard was unpaved; one could imagine dozens of concealed assassins in its recesses. Our host appeared and ushered us into an interior which by comparison, and indeed in actual fact, was palatial. It was brilliantly lighted and crowded to suffocation—I believe that our clerk had summoned his relatives from all over India to witness the honour that the *Sahiblog* were paying him. We were presented to his father, a venerable ancient who spoke no word of English but mumbled greetings in Urdu through his long white beard. We two dined



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in state alone and at a raised table; our host waited on us, reserving his own meal until later, and the hordes of relatives gazed on us in awe-struck wonder. Then there was a nautch, and the lady who was the principal performer ogled me so shamelessly that, what with the ribald comments of my friend the manager, I strained every nerve in my body in the endeavour to preserve my dignity. As I had previously, in accordance with the rules of Oriental politeness, grossly over-eaten, this might have proved dangerous. I resolved then and there that this should be the last banquet I would attend unless obliged thereto by the exigencies of duty.

The nautch is not a branch of the terpsichorean art that has ever appealed to me. I have seen a good many of them, and they are too static—even statuesque. It seems to be a point of honour with the Indian dancer that she shall on no account move her feet. The “dance” consists merely in undulation from the hips accompanied by hand-waving and a curious kind of caterwauling that is known locally as singing. Sometimes, to make sure there shall be no concession to the perverted Western desire for movement of the feet, they even dance sitting down. The orchestra that accompanies the nautch forms an interesting study. I hold the theory that their instruments are constructed from old cigar-boxes from designs by Heath Robinson. However, the Indians seem to like it.

Nor are the bazar beauties who perform in the

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nautch particularly alluring to Western eyes. Their cheekbones are broad, their lips thick, their noses decorated with what always seems to me a superfluity of jewellery. I did once see a nautch girl who was comely enough in an exotic style. At the conclusion of her performance, however, she drew towards her a brass pot and, clearing her throat with vigour, expectorated into the receptacle a stream of crimson, *pan*-laden saliva. After that I went home.

For the journalist, as I have explained, there is no exodus to the pleasant coolness of the Hills as soon as the hot weather comes along. I have, however, made one or two trips to Simla—partly because one's health imperatively demands an occasional spell of cool weather, and partly because in order to keep in touch with political affairs, it is necessary to pay a visit now and again to where the Legislative Assembly is sitting. On my first journey to Simla I committed the gross blunder of motoring up the mountain road from Kalka behind a Sikh driver; in an earlier chapter I foreshadowed that dire experience; description of it is beyond my power.

Simla is a delightful town to the eye, more than a little reminiscent of Switzerland. The sudden change in temperature, however, as well as the great increase in altitude, is liable to have rather distressing physical effects for the first day or two, and one finds a walk of two or three hundred yards

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quite an exhausting affair. If one does not desire to walk, the only conveyance available is the rickshaw; no horse-drawn or motor-driven vehicle is permitted in Simla, although horse-riding is allowed. The deprivation, however, is not a serious one, for Simla is both small and centralised; one can walk from one end of it to the other without undue fatigue after one has been in residence a week. A rickshaw is needed, however, if one proposes to make the trip to Mashobra, a well-known and very beautiful suburb of Simla.

For one of Bohemian tastes Simla is no place for a holiday. It is "starchier" even than Delhi in the season, and it is so small that one stumbles over members of the Viceroy's Suite at every step. The harassed Government official dare not venture on even the mildest "jag" while he is at Simla; three-quarters of his superiors would be bound to witness it. So at Simla everybody's behaviour is exemplary and everybody's temper is frayed. They are all looking forward to the colossal "beat-up" they will enjoy when they are back again in the comparative privacy of the Capital. We who remain in the plains have our compensations. We at least are not always in range of the eagle eye of our superiors.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PEOPLES OF INDIA

THE Indian Statutory Commission, the duty of which was to generalise profitably on conditions in India, started its thankless task with the statement, "it is dangerous to generalise about anything in India". No truer words were ever written. In a vast sub-continent the size of Europe proper, and with a larger and more heterogeneous population than Europe possesses, no postulate can be made that will be universally true, and almost any postulate, however apparently absurd, will have some modicum of truth. Every schoolboy knows, for example, that India is a country where the inhabitants are black and the weather is exceedingly hot. The schoolboy is right. Nevertheless, India is also a country in parts of which the inhabitants are white and the weather is exceedingly cold. The people are pacific; the people are martial. Their personal habits are insanitary; they make a fetish of cleanliness. If you journey the length and breadth of India you will experience every degree of temperature, from equatorial heat to almost arctic cold; you will meet Indians of every shade of colour, from the coal-black Dravidian through intermediate tinges of *café-au-lait* to the Kashmiri

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who may be a couple of shades lighter than you are yourself. And you will find the most amazing divergencies of thought, religion, standards of education, social customs, physical prowess, political predilections, and every other ingredient that goes to make up personality. There is no typical Indian figure to correspond to the national symbol of the British John Bull or the American Uncle Sam; and you may take it that any author who points to a particular trait as being characteristically "Indian" is rather more likely than not to be lying. Of course we all do it; I have no doubt that this book contains several examples of such sweeping and unreliable generalisations. Let the reader be warned and take them at their true valuation—which is not a high one.

India contains (according to the 1931 Census) nearly three hundred and fifty million people—a fifth of the population of the world. Of these, far the greater number are Hindus. In 1921 (when the total population was in the region of three hundred and twenty millions) the figures were:—

Hindus	216,735,000
Mohammedans	68,735,000
*Buddhists	11,571,000
Christians	4,754,000
Sikhs	3,239,000

There are also about fifteen million persons either

\*This figure includes the population of Burma, which is preponderantly Buddhist, and which is now separate from India. There are very few Buddhists in India proper.

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belonging to religious denominations of small size or coming under the heading of "unclassified religions".

It would be a gross error to suppose that these are mere religious differences, comparable with those that divide Protestants and Roman Catholics in England. The religions of India (to which I shall refer in more detail in the next chapter) represent as a rule, very real distinctions of race and of the whole attitude of the adherent towards life. For the Eastern religion is intensely practical; it is concerned at least as much with material as with spiritual things. Hinduism and Mohammedanism are not merely differing forms of worship; they inculcate different and often incompatible rules for the conduct of everyday life. It is not difficult to tolerate in one's neighbour an unfamiliar form of worship; it is impossible to live amicably a life based on a wholly alien conception of the practical needs and duties of existence. This is one of the reasons that have led to the deep-seated antagonism that exists, and, one fears, must continue to exist for many years, between the two numerically preponderant communities, Hindu and Mohammedan, and that has evinced itself so often in bitterness and in bloodshed. The Hindus represent the majority of the population, but the Mohammedan minority cannot forget that they are the descendants of the conquerors of India. The Hindu is the talker, the Mohammedan the fighter; or as Mr. Gandhi, with more truth than tact, has

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expressed it, "the Mussulman as a rule is a bully, and the Hindu as a rule is a coward". Between the bullies and the cowards the "Satanic Government" preserves, with British bayonets in the background, an unstable equilibrium.

It has been well said that the essential of the social fabric of Hinduism is caste; and certainly no understanding of Hinduism, or even of the life of other communities in India to-day, can be reached without some study of the baffling phenomena of caste. As I have already explained, the caste system in modern Hinduism comprises the four main divisions of priests, warriors and administrators, traders and agriculturists, and workers—although there are thousands of smaller castes and subdivision of castes. But it is doubtful whether the multitude of castes that exist to-day can be traced back to these four main divisions. Emile Senart, in *Caste in India*, puts forward the theory that "the names of Brahman, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudra* represent not four primitive 'castes', but four 'classes'. These classes may be exceedingly ancient; it is only in later times that they have been superimposed on the castes. Different by nature and origin, the true castes, or the organisms from which they sprang, were from the beginning more diverse and more numerous." The point, however, is one of only historical interest. There is no doubt that to-day every caste Hindu falls into one or other of these four main divisions.

Castes can be classified (according to Risley) only

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on the basis of social precedence; although classifications on other bases have frequently been attempted. Caste differences are expressed as a rule in the realms of marriage, of hereditary trades or occupations, and of the preparation of food and the company in which food may be eaten.

As regards marriage, the majority of castes are both endogamous and exogamous; members of the caste may not marry outside it, but they also may not marry within the *gotra*—a circle within the caste. This circle is of varying radius, and includes those relatives who come within a certain degree of consanguinity, which is generally traced through the male line. This practice is somewhat similar to the marriage customs of various totemistic tribes in an early stage of civilisation. Totemism is by no means unknown among the more backward sections of the population of India, and signs of it are to be found also in many of the taboos which some of the castes place on certain forms of food.\* It is fascinating to speculate how far the origins of caste, which have so far baffled enquiry, can be traced to primitive totemism.

As the caste grows in numbers, thus adding to the difficulty of finding suitable mates outside its boundaries, so also is there a tendency for the *gotra* to increase in size, and the field of choice in marriage becomes almost unbearably restricted. As a result, a system of "hypergamy", or "marrying down",

\*The Halakhors at Poona refuse the flesh of the hare, since their patron, Lal Beg, is reputed to have been suckled by a hare.



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has been introduced, whereby a man of a higher caste may mate with a woman of a lower caste, the children ranking as members of the higher caste. The reverse procedure, however, is not permissible. Thus a high-caste man and a low-caste woman are virtually unrestricted in their marital choice, while the high-caste woman and the low-caste man will be hard put to it to find an eligible spouse. This weighs much more heavily on the high castes than on the low, for a man may postpone his marriage indefinitely or even remain a bachelor, while for a woman to attain the age of puberty unmarried is an appalling disgrace to her family.\* The high-caste Brahman, therefore, finds himself very enviably placed as far as matrimony is concerned. He can marry any woman he chooses (barring the very low castes, whom he probably would not consider in any case), whereas he represents the only possible husband for the women of his own caste. He is much in demand; and his price in the marriage market rises accordingly. The orthodox Brahman with a family of daughters must face impoverishment to satisfy the financial demands of those few potential sons-in-law who have "cornered the market". But payments to rapacious bridegrooms, apart from being undesirable in themselves, constitute no great alleviation. The Brahman father of unmarried girls who happens to be poor cannot

\*"An unmarried son does not disgrace the family, but there is no greater reproach than to have a daughter unmarried at the age of puberty."—(Sir Herbert Risley, in *The People of India*.)

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avail himself of this remedy; and even were wealth universal it would not serve to increase the number of Brahman males. Clearly the only solution to the problem lies in polygamy among the higher castes and polyandry among the lower, and this is the method which, in many parts of India, has been adopted. Polygamy is, of course, recognised by the Mohammedans, and it may therefore be said that a plurality either of wives or of husbands is permitted in theory, even if it be not practised, by all sects in India other than Christian.

The Hindu ideas of caste, in so far as they affect marriage, have spread to other communities in India, and the Mohammedans equally display a tendency to marry within a restricted area. "In India," says Sir Herbert Risley, "caste is in the air; its contagion has spread even to the Mohammedans, and we find its evolution proceeding on characteristically Hindu lines. In both communities foreign descent forms the highest claim to social distinction; in both promotion cometh from the West. As the twice-born Aryan is to the mass of Hindus, so is the Mohammedan of Arab, Persian, Afghan or Moghul origin to the rank and file of his coreligionists. . . . So within the higher ranks of the Mohammedans a Saiyad will marry a Sheikh's daughter, but will not give his daughter in return, and intermarriage between the upper circle of *soi-disant* foreigners and the main body of Indian Mohammedans is generally reprobated. . . ."

Although there can be little doubt that the first

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manifestations of caste in India were racial, and that they represented the social barriers set up by the conquering Aryans to avoid the danger of their assimilation by the darker-skinned and inferior native population, the most obvious caste distinctions are those appertaining to trades. The invading Aryans themselves were, it is to be assumed, divided into the three categories or classes of priests, warriors and traders (Brahmans, *Kshatriyas*, and *Vaishyas*). The non-Aryan populace would be outcaste foreigners; and ultimately a few of them who adopted Aryan civilisation and obeyed Aryan laws would be accepted, more or less on sufferance, and would form the nucleus of the despised community of *Sudras*. They are not of the twice-born, they do not wear the sacred thread, and they would naturally find themselves allotted the most menial tasks of the community. It is not surprising that this inferior order of beings, dark-skinned and of another race, debarred from marriage and from social intercourse with their conquerors, and condemned to the carrying out of the most degrading duties, should be despised; and that in course of time the performance of these very duties should itself acquire a share of the odium originally attaching to those who performed them. From the giving of a certain task to a man because he is of a low type, it is but a step to considering a man of a low type because he carries out that task.

It is true that a common occupation is to some extent the principle and foundation of caste. In the

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words of Mr. Gandhi, who, while condemning the theory that any section of mankind should be regarded as "untouchable", is yet an upholder of the caste system, "*Varna* means pre-determination of the choice of a man's profession. The law of *Varna* is that a man shall follow the profession of his ancestors for earning his livelihood. Every child naturally follows the 'colour' of his father, or chooses his father's profession. *Varna*, therefore, is in a way the law of heredity (*sic*). . . . It is not a human invention but an immutable law of nature. . . . Hindus, by their discovery of this irresistible (*sic*) social tendency, have been able to achieve in the spiritual field what no other nation in the world has achieved." Unhappily Mr. Gandhi has not particularised the spiritual benefits that have resulted from the caste system, so that for the conscientious enquirer they must remain merely a matter for speculation. Nor has he explained how the "irresistible" tendency of the Hindu child to follow his father's profession has permitted the growth of new professions. But Mr. Gandhi, unfortunately, has an "irresistible tendency" to dogmatise without precision.

Although there is undoubtedly an occupational aspect of caste, it is nevertheless true that many occupations are found amid the members of the same caste, and that several castes are devoted to the same occupation. This applies particularly to the lower castes, but even among the Brahmans a great variety of occupations is found. True, the

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Brahman community includes priests, ascetics and mendicants; but it also includes merchants, agriculturists, soldiers, cooks,\* and even robbers.† Whatever may be the theory of caste, and whatever may have been the practice in the past, there is no doubt that to-day all sorts of professions are followed by all sorts of castes. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, certain professions are regarded as being dignified and certain other professions as being degraded, and as a general rule the higher castes will tend to occupy themselves with the former and lower castes with the latter.

The caste system pays a great deal of attention to the rules governing the preparation of food, and the company in which meals may be taken. The majority of the higher caste Hindus are vegetarian, and to all of them, of course, beef is forbidden. The pious Hindu will not eat food that has been cooked or prepared by a member of a lower caste; and in some cases food that has been touched even by a member of a higher caste is taboo. A Hindu will often throw away food if a Mussulman's shadow has fallen on it. Eating has a sacramental value in Hinduism (as, indeed, in most other religions). On special occasions a whole caste will dine together; when a member has offended against the caste regulations he frequently has to give a caste

\*In the United Provinces a large number of Brahmans are cooks, many of them in non-Brahman homes. (Indian Statutory Commission's Report, 1930).

†The Sanauriya Brahmans of Bundelkhand are a caste of hereditary robbers.

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dinner in expiation of his offence,\* and the partaking of this communal meal symbolises and expresses his reinstatement in the fold.

Outside the community of caste Hindus are a body of despised "untouchables", accounting for about thirty per cent. of the entire Hindu population, whose touch is defilement to the twice-born. The treatment meted out to them varies in different parts of India; but there can be no doubt that their lot is a desperately unhappy one. They are for the most part miserably poor and almost entirely uneducated; they are denied access to schools and wells used by the higher castes, they must live segregated as pariahs and perform all the most degrading tasks, and in some parts of India they are debarred from using the public highways, or must shout out the fact of their degrading presence lest any lordly Brahman be contaminated by their passing within his circle of vision. But it would be a mistake to suppose that all "untouchables" are in as melancholy a plight as this. Even among the out-castes there is caste; and some untouchables regard themselves as superior to others—are, in fact, less untouchable than the rest. Untouchability is, to some extent, a matter of degree; and the difference between the lowest class of *Sudra* and the highest class of untouchable is not very apparent to the Western eye.

\*Mr. Gandhi's brother had to give a caste dinner to the Modh Banyas to expiate the Mahatma's offence in having gone to England to read for the Bar.

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The lot of the *Sudra* in the Hindu social system is not much more enviable than that of the untouchable. Although technically a Hindu, he is not of the twice-born and is denied the privilege of wearing the sacred thread. His sole duty in life is to serve the other three castes, and he is forbidden to participate in many of the Hindu religious rites. In the Hindu sacred books the lowly position of the *Sudra* is very clearly indicated; one of the epics tells of how the god Rama cut off the head of a young *Sudra* whose only crime was that he had taken part in religious rites forbidden to his caste; and it is laid down that the murder of a *Sudra* is to be placed on the same level as the destruction of a chameleon, a peacock or a frog—the Brahman who is guilty of such a crime can be absolved if he recite, as a penance, a number of *Mantras*. Also the older Hindu law books say that it is the duty of a judge always to decide in favour of a Brahman against a lowlier adversary. Under British administration, of course, these principles are no longer carried out in practice. The fact that the *Sirkar* has deprived the Brahman of many of his ancient privileges is perhaps one of the reasons why the Brahman community is so preponderatingly active in anti-British agitation.

Despite the fact that the British rule has done much to remove the legal inequalities between Brahman and *Sudra*, the social prestige of the former remains enormous. The Brahman has the monopoly of all priestly functions; for every wedding and every

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funeral (to name only two of the many ceremonies in connection with Hindu ritual) his presence is essential, and must be paid for. He has almost the sole prerogative of effective education; his opportunities and his keener intellect—for a fox might take lessons in cunning from a Brahman Pandit—enable him to play so preponderating a part in affairs that the non-Brahman community has to seek for special representation to be allotted even in areas where the numerical strength of the Brahmans is contemptible. The mass of the population of India is so hopelessly illiterate—only 13.9 per cent. of the men and 2.1 per cent. of the women can read and write—that the small proportion of literate Indians drown with their clamour the inarticulate millions who are toiling on the land.

Lawyers, doctors, journalists, the Western-educated few—these are the Indians whose voices are heard at the meetings of the National Congress and at the Round Table Conferences. They are by no means typical of the masses of India.

India is essentially and above all an agricultural country. The towns are scattered, are few and far between. The overwhelming majority of Indians live in the villages and earn their scanty food by tilling the soil—many of them have never even seen a large town. Mr. Gandhi has truly said, “our cities are not India. India lives in her seven hundred and fifty thousand villages”. These toiling millions,



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uneducated and wretchedly poor,\* exercising the privileges of "democracy" by voting for candidates of whom they have never heard on voting papers that have to be decorated with pictures because the electorate cannot read—are suffering dumbly and helplessly while their "representatives" talk glibly of "Dominion Status" and "Independence" for *Bande Mataram*.† To the ryot these are meaningless phrases. He asks only that some administration or other should aid him when famine threatens to deprive him of his daily food, and for some help against the extortion of the money-lenders who are battenning on his blood. It will take generations of educational work before he can become as politically conscious even as the English ploughman of three centuries ago.

It is marvellous that the Indian ryot manages to wrest from the cruel, sun-baked land of his birth even the scanty livelihood by means of which he supports existence. Flood, pestilence or famine are always threatening him, and on a scale unknown for centuries in the Western world. Then again, the inclemency of the weather and the wretched little tracts of ground that are available—for huge areas in India are totally unsuited for cultivation—sorely restrict his activities. The Indian is a hard worker, but he has not enough land usefully to

\*The average yearly income is reckoned at less than £8 per head; but even this is probably an exaggerated figure. At the opening of the century Lord Curzon estimated it at only a quarter of that sum.

†The Motherland.

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employ his full time, and there are long periods during which climatic conditions render him enforcedly idle.\* As a result he is always poor, always in want of the bare necessities of life. And should there by some miracle be a succession of good harvests, should he show signs of rising by a hair's-breadth above the condition of abject penury, there will be the marriage of a daughter, the ceremonies in connection with which will impoverish him for years to come, or the Pathan moneylender will descend on the village, leaving ruin and desolation in his wake.

The Pathan moneylender is a type of financial shark which is, I believe, peculiar to India. It would be difficult to conceive of anything less like the conventional idea of a usurer. True, he is swarthy and Semitic in appearance, he has a hooked nose and little beady eyes, and he drives a harder bargain than Shylock ever proposed on the Rialto. But there the resemblance ends. The traditional moneylender of the West is ingratiating in conversation and mild of aspect; when he fastens his claws into the unfortunate debtor it is by means of the ordinary legal procedure; there is a complicated business of bills and promissory notes and mortgages, of writs and attachments. The Pathan never takes a case to court; he enforces payment by the older, quicker and more efficacious means of the *lex talionis*. The

\*The cultivation of less than two and a quarter acres of land cannot employ a man for more than a comparatively small number of days in the year. (Bengal Census, 1921).

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Pathan moneylender but rarely asks his victim for a receipt. He never forgets a face; he will recognise his debtor the next time he sees him, and Heaven help the wretched ryot who fails to meet his instalments. The Pathan will follow him, if need be, all over India, and when he finds his man he will remonstrate, in the first instance, with a cudgel. For the villain who fails to pay up even after this gentle reminder, there is a knife in reserve.

Nor does the Pathan circularise prospective clients with elegantly phrased communications offering loans to any amount on the security of note of hand alone. The Pathan will not lend the ryot "any amount"; he will lend him a carefully calculated sum which will always be a little, but not much, in excess of the debtor's ability to pay. His rate of interest is at the atrocious figure of two annas in the rupee per month, which works out at 150 per cent. per annum. Actually, however, the rate is harsher than these figures would imply. The first month's interest is deducted from the original loan; and the next month's interest falls due on the first of the succeeding month, no matter on what day of the month the money is borrowed. For example, a ryot borrows the sum of fifty rupees from the Pathan on the 20th of the month. The Pathan deducts the first month's interest immediately, and also a "fee" (for Heaven knows what imaginary service) which may be in the region of five rupees. Thus his client will receive only Rs. 38 as. 12, out of which a further Rs.6 as. 4 will become due for

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payment in ten days' time. The next month, therefore, he will have only Rs. 32 as. 8 out of his capital sum, on which he will have to go on paying over six rupees a month—in effect more than 200 per cent. per annum—until the debt is repaid; and it never is repaid. Sooner or later the ryot will find himself unable to meet one of the monthly instalments. Then there will be weeping and wailing in the village. The Pathan will appear, accompanied by two or three burly and truculent henchmen. They will “beat up” the unfortunate villager with their *lathis* until he is half dead, and finally the poor wretch will be only too grateful to accept whatever terms his oppressors may propose. Ultimately the Pathans will take mercy on him. They will grant him a further loan of fifty rupees. But the ryot will see precious little of the money. There are the “deductions” running to nearly twelve rupees, which applied equally to the original loan; there is the overdue month's interest to be paid, together with interest on that interest; and there are the “expenses” of the extortioners who have had to come to the village to collect. For aught I know they may charge him for wear and tear on their *lathis* as well. The ryot will find himself left with just about enough money out of this second loan to buy ointment for his injuries; and in succeeding months there will now be double interest to pay. He is by this time fairly in the clutches of the Pathan; nothing but death will free him.

Despite the terror which he inspires, the Pathan

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is never at a loss for clients. Where there is abject poverty, there is a happy hunting ground for the usurer. And apart from his often pressing physical needs, the ryot is continually requiring relatively large sums of money. When his daughters marry he must, however desperate his circumstances, expend at least a year's income on the wedding festivities. Where is the money to come from unless the obliging moneylender supplies it? If he has become "unclean" there is a caste dinner to be given. The ryot has no bank balance on which to draw; again the aid of the Pathan must be invoked. And should none of these incidental expenses happen to occur for some time, still the enterprising Pathan is not at a loss. He has mastered the economic law that where there is no market a market must be created. He will descend on the village, armed with his *lathi*, and will literally compel the villagers, under the threat of physical force, to accept loans for which they have no possible use. Usury is the profession of the Pathan, but his methods approximate more closely to those of the robber baron than to the practices of the financial shark of the Western world.

The Hindu peasant is not as a rule of the type effectively to resist such tyranny. Generally he is pacifically disposed, and of poor physique; he will submit to the grossest extortions, to the most humiliating slavery, without a struggle. *Cooch parwah nahin*. It is his *Karma*, the logical sequence to the sins he has committed in a former incarnation.

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One is driven to the conclusion that the majority of Hindu ryots must have had a high old time in their previous lives.

Few of the Indian peasant cultivators, and those only the comparatively wealthy, own their own land. For the most part they cultivate wretched little plots which are leased from the Zemindar, or land-holder. A goodly proportion of the proceeds of each harvest must go to the Zemindar, and this gentleman is always on the spot to see that his claim is the first to be paid. The Pathan is a good second; and if the harvest has not been particularly plentiful, the ryot will be lucky if he finds anything left after these two creditors have been satisfied.

The Zemindar as he exists to-day is practically a creation of the British Raj, and he does not appear to be one of the chief blessings for which India has to thank her alien rulers. Originally the Zemindar was a sort of native rent-collector who worked on commission. The task of collecting land revenue all over the country was obviously too vast a one for the Government to undertake unless its employees were to be largely increased in numbers. Therefore, one of the chief men in each district was appointed to represent the Government in so far as the collection of land revenue was concerned. This office tended to become hereditary, and the Zemindar developed into something like the Indian equivalent of an English country squire, until in 1793 the Permanent Settlement practically converted him into a landed proprietor. There can be

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little doubt that this piece of legislation was a blunder in tactics; and John Stuart Mill has pointed out that if it was intended that the Crown should surrender any land it would have been far better to surrender it to the actual cultivator rather than to burden the ryot with the creation of the comparatively useless class of Zemindars.

The growing community of Christians in India is recruited mainly from the lower castes of *Sudras*, or from the ranks of the untouchables. This fact should occasion no surprise. The outcaste has everything to gain and nothing to lose by the adoption of Christianity; he can suffer no loss of caste, his position in society can be no lower than it already is. On the contrary, as a Christian he will acquire new dignity and new self-respect, as well as many educational advantages; there is a higher percentage of literacy among Christians than among almost any other community in India. Hindu critics not infrequently sneer at the work of the missionaries on this ground, and claim that the Christian religion is one that appeals only to the lowest elements in the community. The criticism is no new one; it was levelled at the Fathers of the Church in very early days. It was and is open to the reply that Christianity must make provision for those whom other faiths reject.

A more serious objection to Christian missionary work in India is one that has been made by Mr. Gandhi and other responsible leaders, that the

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missionaries as a rule are too Westernised in their beliefs and their prejudices, that they evince a lack of respect for Eastern creeds and a hostility to Eastern customs, and that the Indian recruit to Christianity is taught to flout deliberately all for which his fellow-countrymen care most. This accusation has been denied by the missionaries; but it seems not improbable that it contains a substratum of truth. It is difficult for an English-educated missionary to conceal his impatience of undisguised idol-worship, to tolerate customs which his early training must have led him to regard as abominable. And the Indian is always particularly "touchy"; he is ever ready to take offence. He will suffer tyranny more readily than patronage, and he cannot forget that the adherents of his faith had built up a great and complex civilisation when the forefathers of the Christians were scratching their first rude inscriptions on stone tablets. The Hindu has his own mythology, fuller and more richly imaged than the Christian epos, he can match every Biblical text with a *Shastra* from the *Bhagavad Gita*; and he is inclined to resent the superior airs of the adherents of what he must regard as a mere parvenu among religions.

It is in the direction of educational and general welfare work, rather than that of proselytising, that the most valuable help has been given by the missionaries to India. Even here, however, their methods have not wholly escaped criticism. The same complaint is made—and is made not wholly



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without justification—of unnecessary Westernisation of the natives. The student at European missionary schools is often encouraged to wear flimsy and unsuitable approximations to European clothes instead of the cooler and in every way more suitable national costume. Nor is the curriculum at the educational establishments altogether free from objection, particularly from the point of view of Indian Nationalists—and practically all educated Indians are Nationalists nowadays. Even the exceedingly valuable work being done by Mr. F. L. Brayne, Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon, in the realm of village uplift, has been the cause of offence to some Indians in this respect. One of Mr. Brayne's reforms—and from many points of view an extremely valuable reform—has been to organise troops of Indian boy scouts, who, in addition to learning useful lessons of discipline and self-control, have done a good deal of work in draining and the carrying out of other sanitary measures. One cannot help feeling it is a pity, however, that these boys, who are not being instructed in the principles of Christianity (for Mr. Brayne's work is secular), should nevertheless be encouraged to despise and even to flout the time-honoured customs of their forefathers. It is all very well to class alien beliefs as mere superstitions, but if they are to be removed something else must be introduced to take their place, otherwise a barren atheism is likely to be the result.

In his book, *The Remaking of Village India*, Mr.

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Brayne says: "We do not teach geography and Indian history. Instead we teach co-operation, first-aid, child welfare, sanitation, methods of preventing infectious diseases, and gardening, as these subjects are considered of more practical use." I dare say they are. Nevertheless, if England were under an alien yoke, and if our masters were to ban the teaching of English history in English schools on the ground that it was not of "practical use", I think we should complain. I think we should ask that, say, an hour a week might be spared from the study of gardening, so that the English child might learn something of the glorious tradition of his own country. And the Indian is no less imbued with the love of his country than the Englishman; indeed, with him patriotism is perhaps more of a conscious urge than with us. He is likely to think, and to be right in thinking, that there are elements in the education of a child that are of even more importance in the building up of a healthy nation than the most "practical" instruction that can be given.\*

\*Although I have devoted some space to a mild and I hope not unfair criticism of the work of Mr. Brayne and his associates in Gurgaon, I hope nothing I have said will lead to the supposition that I think the work, taken as a whole, to be anything but a great boon to the people of the district. I have the greatest admiration for the self-sacrificing labours of Mr. and Mrs. Brayne—an admiration that must be shared by all those who have had any opportunity of judging the value of what they have accomplished.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA

THE religions of India are as numerous, as diverse and as incompatible with each other as are the various races that inhabit the country. As between the two numerically preponderant communities, Hindu and Mohammedan, there are such deep-seated differences as almost to make one despair of the possibility of any amicable co-partnership between the adherents of the two faiths. For, as I have previously pointed out, these differences are not mere matters of dogma or of ritual. Both religions touch ordinary acts of daily life at nearly every point; and their incompatibility makes itself felt in the irreconcilable quarrels that arise even apart from specifically religious observances.

Hinduism is the principal religion of India. Its adherents embrace two-thirds of the inhabitants of the country, or half of the total population of the British Empire. Of Muslims there are less than seventy millions. Also, the Muslim faith is not indigenous to India; Indian Mussulmans—even those who are Indian Nationalists—feel a bond of union, and more than a merely religious bond, with the main body of the adherents of Islam; many of them are supporters of the Pan-Islamic movement,

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the aims of which are at least as much political as religious.

The term "Hinduism" covers a tremendous body of differing and (one would have thought) inconsistent faiths. From the crude animism of the more backward tribes to the extraordinarily complicated metaphysical system of the Brahmans it is indeed a far cry. It is difficult to believe that the ignorant *Sudra*, propitiating Kali with superstitious and sometimes repulsive rites, is of the same creed as, say, the late Mrs. Besant, with her complete, if incomprehensible, exposition of the doctrines of reincarnation, *Karma*, Yoga, and so forth. But Hinduism finds room for both, as well as for the spiritual needs of all the widely differing types between.

At one end of Hinduism, says Risley, you have animism; at the other end pantheism combined with a system of transcendental metaphysics. Pantheism is defined by Sir Alfred Lyall (in *Hinduism*) as "the doctrine that all the countless deities, and all the great forces and operations of nature, such as the wind, the rivers, the earthquakes, the pestilences, are merely direct manifestations of the all-pervading divine energy which shows itself in numberless forms and manners."

The Hindu Pantheon consists of three principal gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, but Vishnu is incarnated in the persons of other divine or semi-divine beings, and Siva, while not incarnated, is very closely associated with his two consorts, Parbati, the goddess of love and beauty, and Kali,

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the goddess of slaughter. Brahma is the god of being; he represents mere existence, the reality of being. He is not worshipped, for he is also the worshipper; in the whole of India there is only one temple to Brahma. Vishnu, to whom most of the higher-caste Hindus owe primary allegiance, became incarnate for the benefit of mankind. He is, however, a multiple personality, inasmuch as he is also incarnate in various nature gods of a more primitively animistic type, such as Indra, and in such hero-gods as Rama and Krishna. Most of the features of Hinduism that are the least pleasing to the Western mind are in connection with the worship of Siva, or, more precisely, with his indirect worship through Kali. Kali, the goddess of slaughter, has become a sort of patron saint of all evil and misfortune, and the rites observed by some of her devotees bear an analogy with what we should describe as satanism.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Hinduism, and one which has exercised an enormous influence in shaping the characters of its adherents, is the belief in reincarnation and in *Karma*. Expressed as simply as possible—and it is a metaphysical system that defies any very clear exposition—*Karma* represents the principle whereby every one of a man's actions is recorded for or against him, without any provision for repentance, forgiveness or absolution, and at the end of his life a balance is struck and he is reincarnated in a higher or lower scale according to the treatment which his actions have warranted.

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The ultimate goal is the merging of the individual in the Absolute, physical extinction and a spiritual state comparable to the Buddhist Nirvana. Although a man's next reincarnation is dependent on his actions in this life, actually Hinduism leaves but little scope for free will; for his actions in this existence flow naturally and inevitably from the consequences of his actions in previous lives. The *Karma* of the individual is the resultant of the forces flowing from the actions of that individual in this and in past incarnations.

*Karma* is the law of ethical causation. To me, admittedly, this definition conveys but little. It has a deceptive air of simplicity; one feels that here at last one has the essence of Hinduism crystallised in one pregnant phrase. But somehow the more I ponder on it the less it seems to mean. However, it is a definition put forward by one of the leading exponents of Hinduism;\* perhaps it will yield its true meaning if it be studied according to the methods of Yoga.

Yoga is to stop thinking and get beyond or behind consciousness. This is not, be it understood, an extension of the Western technique of psychoanalysis. It represents (so far as I can understand it) an endeavour to approximate as closely as possible, while we are still bound by the ties of the flesh, to that existence of pure abstraction which is to be the final goal of our lives. The *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the principal sacred books of the Hindus, says that

\*Colonel Olcott, quoted with approval by the late Mrs. Besant.

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“equilibrium is called Yoga”. It is, of course, purely a spiritual equilibrium that is referred to. The Yogi must, so far as is possible for one still preserving his physical life, dispense with the gratification of all carnal needs. He must be celibate and ascetic; he must eat as little as possible, and that of the simplest fare; and above all, he must stop thinking. This is not as easy a matter as the light-minded may incline to suppose. It by no means implies the cessation of abstract thought; indeed the Yogi must spend practically the whole of his time in contemplation. What is barred appears to be critical or analytical thought—just that type of thought which we of the West esteem most highly. The aspirant to Yoga must cease all criticism, all analysis, he must concentrate his entire being on the essential oneness. For this purpose he will find the Hindu *Mantras* of great use. He must select a *Mantra* and repeat it over and over again many thousands of times, after which he will attain to various magical powers, including that of levitation. Even a *Mantra* is unnecessary; it will suffice if he repeat the mystic word “Om” a sufficient number of times until he attains to the consciousness of supernatural power, or until, as the Western scientist would say, auto-hypnosis induces delusions.

If this inadequate attempt to describe the philosophy of Hinduism appears flippant, it is not intended to be so. That a product of the critically and materially-minded West should write with sympathy of what must seem to him this woolly-minded

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mysticism, would be too much to expect; but I have at least endeavoured, as far as my prejudices will allow, to transcribe accurately what the exponents of Hinduism themselves claim for the highest adepts of the faith.

That the Hindu ascetic, the true Yogi, or Sadhu, is frequently a saintly individual, none can deny. His alleged magical powers, however, I take leave to doubt. Perhaps this is an impertinence, since they are very fully documented and there is, I am told, a vast body of people who will testify to the miracles that they themselves have witnessed. It may be so; all I can say is that I have never been fortunate enough to meet any of these people.

There is one story, for example, that is always told to every newcomer to India. It concerns a Sadhu who one day took his seat on the floor of a first-class carriage in a train, and lapsed immediately into silent contemplation. A European passenger came in, objected to the Sadhu's presence, and asked him to leave; the Sadhu, being engaged in the practice of Yoga, was unable to respond to the external stimulus of conversation. Ultimately he was bodily removed and placed on the platform. The guard blew his whistle and waved his flag, the engine-driver did whatever it is that engine-drivers do in such circumstances, but the train refused to move. No mechanical defects were discoverable, no obstructions on the line, nothing. Finally, after a great deal of delay, the Sadhu was replaced in the carriage, and the train steamed merrily off.



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It was my friend Ram Lal who first told me this truly remarkable history. When I asked him for evidence he was shocked at my incredulity. He told me that everybody knew the truth of the story, that accounts of it had appeared in the newspapers and their accuracy had never been challenged. I asked him to show me one such account; it was not available. I asked him the name of the Sadhu, the name of the engine-driver, the name of the station. None of this information was forthcoming. Why should I seek for confirmation of an historical incident the truth of which was known to "everybody"? Nevertheless, unreasonable though it may seem, my faith was not strong enough to swallow this anecdote.

The same sort of thing happened to me in regard to the rope-trick (I am not, by the way, suggesting that the rope-trick is performed by Hindu ascetics or that it has anything to do with religion). I have always wanted to see the rope-trick, and I have never seen it. Ultimately I gave up hope of witnessing the performance myself, and I concentrated on trying to find somebody else who had seen it. I never found one; although I must have met literally hundreds of people who knew somebody else who had seen the rope-trick. Just in the same way I have acquired a huge body of evidence of the miraculous feats of the Sadhus, but that evidence is, without exception, second- or third-hand. I have some respect for the laws of evidence and an ingrained reluctance to believe in the phenomena of magic;

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I am therefore led to the conclusion that the supernatural powers of the Sadhus do not exist. But I am open to conviction. Any Sadhu who will come over to London and stop the Metropolitan Railway during the rush hour shall receive my unqualified apologies.

The refinements of Yoga are not, of course, for the rank and file of the Hindu religion; but their lives are profoundly affected by the doctrine of *Karma*. Were there no *Karma* there would be no *cooch parwah nahin*, no caste system, no traditional conservatism of the East. It induces a loss of incentive, a deadly bar to progress. A man is born to a certain station in life; the caste system ensures that he shall not rise above it, and *Karma* rationalises the procedure by assuring him that his low degree is due to his sins in a former incarnation. Let him walk softly, let him pay due reverence to his natural lords and masters the Brahmans, otherwise he may face life in his next incarnation as an "untouchable", as some lowly animal, or even, *horribile dictu*, as a woman.\* Meanwhile, let him console himself with the thought that his sufferings, however apparently painful, are not real. All the appearances of this world are Maya—illusion. Poverty, starvation, famine, what are all these but illusions preceding the great illusion of death, after which there will be still further illusory incarnation and the final reality of being merged in Universal Being? So, as far as this life is concerned, *cooch parwah nahin*.

\*In the order of reincarnation women are placed seven stages below a man, three below a camel, and one below a pig.

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Much has been written on what is alleged to be the exaggerated importance attached to sex in the Hindu religion, and the worship of Siva is frequently, and not very justly, described as identical with the cult of the phallus. In this I think we do the Hindu an injustice. It must be remembered that Hinduism, despite the refinements of its metaphysic, is a primitive religion, and that many of its adherents are still at a primitive stage of civilisation. That the urge to procreation and the worship of fertility are two of the strongest motive forces that have led to the establishment of all organised faiths is known to every student of comparative religions, and the sexual symbolism employed in every faith is also not difficult to discern. It is not to be wondered at that the sexual symbolism of the educationally backward should be less disguised, less wrapped up in the refinements of poetry and metaphysics. And we are liable to suppose that the phallic significance of many Hindu symbols is as apparent to the Hindu worshipper as it is to us. This is far from being the case. Not only is the average Hindu less well-equipped educationally than we are to trace such connections; but also one naturally tends to see sexual symbolism in another religion more easily than in one's own. It is difficult to sympathise with the point of view of the European who will point to the very obvious sexual symbolism of the Kutab Minar\*

\*The Kutab Minar is, of course, Mohammedan in origin; but it serves nevertheless as an example of phallic symbolism in Indian religious architecture.

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while hotly denying any phallic significance to the spire of a Christian Church.

But although those who stress the element of sex in the Hindu religion overstate their case, there is no denying that they have a case to state. Hindu worship of the phallus is so widespread and so devoid of the mystic element that might roughly be described as "sublimation" as to render it somewhat shocking to the Westerner unaccustomed to so barefaced a cult of fecundity. For this there are many reasons. In the East sexual maturity comes early; the average Indian child is physically an adult, feeling all the normal sexual desires and impulses of an adult, at what must seem to us an abnormally early age. I have already touched on the subject of the compulsory marriage of girls at or before the age of puberty; and there is also the supreme desire of all Hindu parents for male offspring. Hindus, despite their generally poor physique, are as a rule very highly sexed—even Mr. Gandhi, who unites with a strong ideal of asceticism a body that one would have thought hardly equal to normal sexual demands, admits that in the early days of his marriage (at the age of thirteen) he indulged his desires to a degree that would be beyond the powers of most adult Englishmen. Since religion is, for the most part, a rationalisation of man's instinctive urges, it is not wonderful that an over-sexed and early-maturing people should follow a faith that is deeply tinged with sexuality even in its grosser manifestations.

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One of the peculiarities of the Hindu religion which tends to be rather shocking to the Occidental and which, to judge from recent debates in the Legislative Assembly, is beginning also to jar on the susceptibilities of many Indians, is the institution of *devadassīs*, or temple prostitutes. The modern European finds it difficult to tolerate with patience a system that provides for the dedication to the gods of the infant daughters of respectable families, it being well recognised that such girls are to be reserved for the carnal use of the priests of the temple and of the casual worshippers who visit it. It must be remembered, however, that it is the universal reprobation of prostitution in the West (although such reprobation by no means implies abstinence) that makes the practice so shocking to us. In India it arouses no such repugnance. Even ordinary prostitution does not brand the practitioner with the social and moral stigma that we should expect—it is regarded as being a useful and not dishonourable profession—and religious prostitution is one of the most dignified callings. Many of these girls, after a number of years' service in the temples, become the secondary wives of wealthy Zemindars. Naturally they are among the most physically attractive of Indian girls or they would not have been chosen for the duties they carry out, and their way of life, by freeing them from the seclusion and the many restrictions to which "respectable" Indian girls are subjected, renders them better educated and broader minded than the

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majority. Nor are we justified in attributing the institution of temple prostitutes to "decadent" India. There is good reason for believing that this is one of the (not always valuable) lessons that India has learned from her neighbours.\*

Child marriage, whatever may be said for or against the practice—and it is not without its defenders—does not appear to be anywhere inculcated by the Hindu sacred books. It is, in fact, more a social than a religious custom, and as such I defer consideration of it till the next chapter.

The position of the woman in the Hindu religion is a lowly one. As I have already pointed out, in the order of reincarnation she is placed below several of the domestic animals, and in her life she is supposed to be definitely subordinate, physically, mentally and spiritually, to her husband. A woman is spiritually and morally unclean; she becomes sanctified only by the religious ceremonies in connection with her giving in marriage. This is one of the reasons that cause orthodox Hindus to frown on the custom of widow-remarriage. It is only the "giving" of the woman in marriage by the father that sanctifies her. She then becomes the husband's absolute property; and after the latter's death she cannot contract another true marriage, since, as she does not revert again to the father,

\*Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, says that pre-marital prostitution was common in Cyprus, Babylon, Heliopolis and Phoenicia, in connection with the worship of Aphrodite, Astarte and Anaitis. The custom was formally abolished by the Emperor Constantine, but it seems probable that it continued to be practised "unofficially".

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there is no-one to "give" her to her new spouse. It seems clear, however, that this is only the evidence of a deeper-seated repugnance to the remarriage of widows. This repugnance is probably due to the moral reprobation in which widows are held. A Hindu widow is considered to be morally responsible for the death of her husband; had she been a dutiful wife the man would not have predeceased her; his death is clearly due to her sins of omission, if not to definite acts of witchcraft on her part. She can expiate her offence only by following him to the grave, by being burned alive (*Suttee*); and for hundreds of years Hindu widows have willingly and cheerfully suffered this ordeal. *Suttee* has, of course, been forbidden under British rule, though I should not be surprised to learn that it persists, *sub rosa*, in certain backward areas.\* The lot of the Hindu widow, even to-day, is so desperately unhappy that one is tempted to wonder whether *Suttee* is not perhaps the most merciful of the alternatives open to her.

One of the most noteworthy features of Hinduism is the sanctity it attaches to life, particularly to the life of certain animals. This principle is carried to its logical extreme by the Jains, who are definitely pledged to the sparing of *all* animal life. They will not eat after sundown, lest they should accidentally consume some stray insect with their food, and they remain in a verminous condition rather than destroy the parasites that infest them. Not all

\*The last *officially* recorded case of *Suttee* occurred as recently as 1927.

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Hindus, of course, go to this length, but certain animals—notably the monkey, the peacock, the snake, and, above all, the cow—are sacred and must not be killed. Mr. Gandhi, who is a sincerely pious Hindu, experienced much soul-searching when the crops in the vicinity of his Ashram were being damaged by monkeys, and he held the view that even to scare the beasts, without doing them any physical harm, was contrary to the rules of non-violence to life which his religion inculcated. Presumably he feared some injury to the monkeys' delicate nervous systems. I have myself frequently been annoyed by the depredations of monkeys in India; I remember in particular one vicious and highly-coloured brute that broke into my office and ripped the bindings off half my books before I found him. I am not myself so bound to the doctrine of *Ahimsa*\* that I would have hesitated on that account to institute reprisals against the simian invader; but in India it is really neither wise nor safe to kill a monkey. A friend of mine who once shot one by accident was obliged to go to all sorts of trouble, and to bury the beast at midnight and in secrecy, lest his sacrilege should be discovered.

The sacredness of the monkey is attributed to the fact that the god Hanuman was incarnated in the form of that animal; and similar tendencies on the part of the Hindu Pantheon have caused quite a large number of animals to be held equally in veneration. Sacred above all else to the Hindu is

\*Non-violence.



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the cow, the mother of all, the symbol of life and fertility. The sacredness of the cow extends to everything appertaining to it; even its waste-products have magical therapeutic virtues, and mixtures of cow-dung and urine are largely used in Ayurvedic medicine. Barren wives kiss cow-dung as a charm to induce fertility, and it is no unusual sight to see women fondly embracing the posteriors of sacred cows that are being led through the streets in Hindu religious processions.

To kill a cow is the worst of all crimes to the mind of the Hindu; it is probably for that reason that the Mohammedans invariably choose cows to be slaughtered at their festival of *Bakr-Id*. As a result *Bakr-Id* is always the signal for large bodies of police and even troops to be centred in areas where there is a mixed population, and it is but rarely that the date passes without riotous affrays between Hindus and Mohammedans. For the Mussulman, it would appear, is not one of the animals to which the doctrine of *Ahimsa* applies.

Unfortunately the reverence which the Hindus pay to animal life is more a matter of sentiment than of reasoned thought. The Hindu will not in any circumstances kill a cow, but he will sell a cow to a Mohammedan well knowing that the animal is destined for slaughter.\* Even his reluctance to kill the cow leads directly to ill-treatment of the

\*"In no part of the world are cattle worse treated than in India. . . . The half-starved condition of the majority of our cattle are (*sic*) a disgrace to us. The cows find their necks under the butcher's knife because the Hindus sell them."—Mahatma Gandhi.

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animal. The Hindu will not take the life of the cow—when Mr. Gandhi authorised the painless slaughter of a tuberculous calf it aroused such a storm of indignation throughout India that it was years before even the Mahatma's prestige was able to overcome it—but he will abandon barren and diseased animals to die of starvation. *He* has not killed them; the sin is not on his head. To a lesser degree the same thing applies to other animals. I remember that while I was in Delhi men were employed to catch and kill the pariah dogs that infest all Indian towns. After a while it was discovered, however, that one of the enterprising gentlemen who held this job was in the habit of accepting bribes from pious Hindus to release all the dogs he had captured. He would then catch them again next day and take a fresh lot of bribes, thus making a handsome income over and above the salary paid to him by a trusting Municipality, while the canine population of Delhi remained unaffected. Ultimately a European had to be appointed to shoot pariah dogs on sight.

Nor does the sacredness which the Hindus attribute to animal life entail any hesitation in treating dumb brutes with the grossest cruelty. I have myself witnessed revolting sights of this description. The treatment accorded to *tonga* ponies is outrageous; they never see a square meal, and the drivers habitually flog them in the genital regions. The methods of gelding, also, are too disgusting to be described. The drivers of bullock-carts but rarely

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make use of the stick or the whip to urge their animals on; it is easier by a sudden jerk to dislocate the animal's tail. I have never once seen a domestic bullock in India the tail of which was not knotted from top to bottom with literally dozens of dislocations. And there is nothing to be done in the matter. My friend the Colonel, whose tender heart was particularly easily touched by the sufferings of animals, used always to keep a stout length of rubber in his car, and I have known him many times to use it to thrash unmercifully a *tonga*-driver who was encouraging his steed in the time-honoured fashion. But Indian judges are liable to take an unsympathetic view of such assaults; and in any case, the driver really hardly merits the punishment. He is only behaving in the traditional manner; he treats a horse just as his father and his father's father did. The thought that the animal may be suffering, or that it would be of any consequence if it were, would never occur to him. Any useful work in the direction of the prevention of cruelty to animals must be preceded by the education of public opinion to the realisation of the rights of animals; and that, in India, will be an arduous task.

Despite the many and basic differences between the Hindu and Mohammedan faiths, each of them has exercised some influence over the other. The caste system, which is an integral part of Hinduism, has to some extent been adopted, as far as marriage is concerned, by the Mohammedans; and on the

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other hand the essentially Mohammedan custom of *purdah* tends to be followed more and more by Hindus. It is a custom that would naturally "graft" easily on to the Hindu faith, with its lowly conception of the rights of women and its complete subordination of the wife to the husband. Even among the Hindus one sees women transacting their affairs under the disfiguring cloak of the hideous *purdah* veil, one sees the little closed palanquins in which some lady of the harem is hidden from the prying eyes of lustful males, and one knows that in the seclusion of many a Hindu as well as Muslim home are thousands of wretched women who will never see the light of day at all except from the inner courtyard of the houses. Deprived of practically all society, with none but the most rudimentary education, they have no pleasures but those of sexuality, nothing to look forward to except an occasional summons from their lords and masters to the conjugal bed. Islam, as Napoleon said, is the religion of the soldier, and the followers of Islam have adopted the Nietzschean theory that woman is the amusement of the warrior's leisure.

It is the Mohammedans of India, together with the Sikhs (a sect of reformed Hindus who reject idol-worship and the Brahmanic authority) who make up the bulk of the fighting forces of India. Their total irreconcilability with the numerically preponderant Hindus constitutes a problem of far-reaching importance and urgency which we shall have to consider in its proper place.

## CHAPTER IX

### INDIAN SOCIAL LIFE

A REALISATION of the lowly place occupied by woman in the Hindu and Mohammedan religions should prepare one to find her equivalently subordinate in social life. This is indeed the case. The *purdah* system leads naturally to very restricted opportunities for social intercourse, and also to educational backwardness which, even in a country with so low a standard of literacy as India's, is remarkable. At the 1921 Census, says the Simon Report, less than one woman in fifty could read and write, and though the number of girls under instruction has increased by 400,000 in the last ten years, far more has been done for boys' than for girls' education. In no province does one girl out of five attend school; in some provinces not one out of twenty or twenty-five. Even in the Punjab, where compulsory education has made most headway, it is not applied to girls.

Nor has the Indian girl, as a rule, any useful training in domestic work to compensate for her lack of general tuition. Such is the general poverty of the country that the standard of comfort in Indian homes is bound to be low. The villagers are for the most part as ignorant of hygiene as of

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aesthetics; the preparation of a humble meal of *dhal* offers little scope for the culinary art, even if the ordinary housewife knew any of the refinements of cooking; and in the direction of the one real aim and object of her existence—the bearing and rearing of children—she is as ignorant as the most untutored country lass in England. The Hindu religion lays it down that a pregnant woman is ritually unclean; she is relegated at that period to a filthy outhouse, covered in dirty and germ-laden rags, and tended during her delivery by the *dhai* (native midwife), who is an untrained and personally unclean “untouchable”, without the most rudimentary ideas of hygiene, let alone surgery.\*

Naturally, in these circumstances, maternal and infant mortality in India are horrifyingly high.† Female children have a far smaller chance of survival than male children. The days when unwanted daughters were murdered on any considerable scale are over; but Indian parents are liable to treat their female offspring in accordance with the famous injunction,

“Thou shalt not kill; but needst not strive  
Officiously to keep alive.”

A daughter means constant trouble and expense for the parents. For years she must be kept in seclusion and sheltered from the eyes of rapacious men; she must definitely be married by the time

\*Revolting details of the horrors of an Indian *accouchement* are given in Miss Mayo's book, *Mother India*.

†The ratio of deaths under one year per thousand births is recorded as 189 as against a figure of 70 for England and Wales.

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she attains the age of puberty, and a considerable dowry must be raised for her. She is never in any circumstances an asset in religious rites, whereas a son is a positive necessity. It is not remarkable, therefore, that the unwanted daughter has not the best chances of survival, and one is able to read the grim truth behind the bald statement that there is an excess of males over females in the population of India amounting to almost nine millions.\*

The practice of child marriage is also responsible for a good many of the evils from which the women—and to a lesser degree the men—suffer. Male and female Indians are often sexually exhausted long before the age at which we should expect them to have any practical acquaintance with sex at all; and the lot of the Hindu girl child who sometimes finds herself at the age of ten or eleven united in the bonds of "holy matrimony" with an ardent, experienced and possibly diseased man of forty may be more easily imagined than described.† The Age of Consent Committee estimated that something like half the girls of India are married before the completion of their fifteenth year; and the Census of 1921 showed that no less than two million were married, and 100,000 were widowed, before the age of ten. For these baby "widows" there is foreshadowed a life of abject misery, with prostitution as perhaps the best of the alternatives

\*Simon Report, 1930.

†Those who relish gruesome details of this nature may be referred to the chapter on the subject in *Mother India*.

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open to them; and it is to be doubted whether the lot of many of the wives will be much happier. For the wife must always be at the disposal of the husband, and the Indian husband is, as a rule, sexually insatiable. With frequent childbearing and almost incessant marital intercourse, she will be a worn-out wreck by the age of twenty.

Marriage customs, like so many other customs in India, vary greatly according to the area or the races under consideration. Child marriage is not as a rule practised by the Mohammedans, and it is, generally speaking, far less prevalent in the North than in the South (where Mohammedan influence has never penetrated). Even where child marriage is the custom, however, it is extremely diverse in its application. The age at which marriage takes place may be anything from six to sixteen; and the "marriage" may and does differ in important essentials. In many cases it is little more than a religious ceremony of betrothal, after which the bride returns to her parents' home, and the marriage is not consummated for a period of perhaps years. But as a general rule, unfortunately, marriage means just what the word implies, and all over India there are thousands of children living together a full conjugal life.\*

Recently the Legislative Assembly passed the Sarda Act, penalising marriage until the wife is

\*Mr. Gandhi was married at the age of thirteen. In *Mahatma Gandhi; His Own Story* he says: "Let the reader make no mistake. I was married, not betrothed."



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fourteen and the husband eighteen; but it is doubtful how far it will be found possible to enforce this law. The great difficulty is that there is no really very considerable body of opinion in India that is hostile to child marriage, and it is almost impossible to reform a social custom by legislation until there is a pretty clear indication that the mass of the people—or at any rate a large majority of the better element among them—desires the reform. In India we have no such indication. Many Indian leaders of irreproachable character, men of brains and of influence, are upholders of the practice of child marriage; and they claim, not without reason, that, even apart from more basic objections to its prohibition, legislative action to that effect must mean police interference in domestic affairs, which is always undesirable. They visualise officious cross-questioning of intending husbands and wives by village constables, with the possibility of bribery and corruption and even of blackmail on a considerable scale. Anyone who knows anything of conditions in India must agree that this is by no means an unreasonable fear, and one wonders whether the effects of the Sarda Act—however noble its aims and however worthy the motives of its sponsors—may not result in more harm than good to India. The whole question is one which bristles with difficulties. It raises, in fact, the more general question: how far are the rulers of a country justified in over-riding the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants in enforcing legislation even though,

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to the minds of Europeans, it is obviously and eminently desirable? In certain cases the problem answers itself; for example, nobody will deny that the British were morally bound to prohibit the practice of *Suttee* even if every man, woman and child in India desired its continuance. There are some things that simply revolt the conscience of any civilised community and must be put a stop to. But there are other cases, of which a modified form of child marriage may be considered to be one, where the balance hangs more evenly, and where one is tempted to wonder whether it would not be wiser to postpone legislation until public opinion has been sufficiently educated to desire the reform of the abuse.

Even the amenability of the average Indian wife will not always suffice for her husband's immoderate needs. In the case of a wife who is continually replenishing the population, there must be more or less frequent periods during which the least considerate of husbands will feel obliged to abstain from conjugal delights; added to which a wife so sorely overburdened cannot hope to retain her sexual attraction for long. The Indian husband is, therefore, a fairly regular customer for the brothel, which finds a steady stream of recruits from the ranks of retired *devadassis* and juvenile widows. There are dozens of brothels in every good-sized Indian town; many of the larger cities have whole streets devoted to the traffic. Nor is normal sexual intercourse the only illicit delight in which these

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houses trade. The majority of them are what are known as "mixed brothels"; the proprietor will enquire politely of the visitor whether his tastes that particular evening run in the direction of heterosexuality or homosexuality. Many of those who frequent such resorts practise both forms of gratification more or less indiscriminately. This practice seems to be particularly common among Mohammedans; I saw more of it in Lucknow\* than in any other station I have visited. I have no reason to believe, and I do not believe, that true homosexuality is any more common among the Mohammedans than among any other community; but a form of bi-sexuality appears extremely prevalent.

Here again the difficulty is that there is no real public reprobation of such practices. The general feeling seems to be well illustrated by a law report that I came across while I was in India. A Mohammedan boy had charged another with a serious assault; and in the course of the hearing the judge asked the boy why, when the assault took place, he had not called out for help. The prosecutor replied that he had not done so because he did not know the identity of his assailant and thought it was a friend of his! The *naïveté* of this explanation seems to me to throw a lurid light on the general attitude towards such offences.

It is useless for us to try to measure the Indian

\*The population of this part of the United Provinces is largely Mohammedan.

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- by our own standards, to fit him to the Western yard-measure. There is no denying that, as a general rule, he will fail to live up to the code we have adopted for ourselves. Why, indeed, should he live up to it? He has his own code, which suits him very well, and with which he does not ask us to comply. And he has very many good points which we of the West, when our respective standards happen not to coincide, sometimes find it difficult to appreciate.

One accusation which Europeans are apt to make—and to make with some justification—is that Indians, according to Western standards, are “shifty” and dishonest. To an extent this is true, and it is symptomatic of the deeper distinction that mentally the Oriental tends to be an introvert and the Occidental an extrovert. The European goes straight to the point, the Indian skirts around it; the European attaches most importance to the communal virtues, the Indian to the personal virtues; the European will try to alter circumstances to suit his views, the Indian will try to adapt his views to meet the circumstances. A trivial but significant instance of the Indian’s “indirectness” is to be found in the particular type of abuse and obscenity favoured in the country. Where one Englishman calls another a —, an Indian will insinuate an oblique reference to the problematical chastity of his enemy’s female relatives. To insult a Mohammedan you must call him, not a swine, but a son of a swine. A term of abuse in India is

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“brother-in-law”, which tacitly suggests the approachability of your adversary’s sister. These are perhaps small indications, but they seem to throw some light on that indirectness of approach which, if not characteristically Indian, is a characteristically oriental trait.

It is a trait that accounts also, I think, for many serious deficiencies in the Indian social organism. Bribery and corruption are rife in almost all ranks of society, and the practice of giving or taking bribes is not regarded with the moral reprobation which we attach to it. I remember on the occasion of my first visit to one of the law courts in India, in the company of my friend Hussein, seeing rows of men squatting outside one of the courts. I asked him the reason of their presence, and was told that they were witnesses waiting to be hired. I expressed my astonishment, and found that Hussein was himself surprised to find me ignorant of so common a practice. “But surely,” I asked him, “a barrister of, say, your standing would not sink to make use of perjured evidence?” “Indeed I would,” he told me frankly. “If I have a good case, with a client in the justice of whose cause I honestly believe, I can’t afford to let the other side have all the witnesses.” Hired witnesses, as he explained to me, pretty well cancel each other out. Judges do not attach a great deal of importance to their evidence, particularly if they are recognised as regular attendants, and in the long run the better case will generally win. And if not, *cooch parwah nahin*. One can always appeal.

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The Indian has an enormous appetite for litigation.\* He will impoverish himself with continual law suits, frequently over the merest trifles, and will be amply satisfied with the fun that he gets out of it. I suppose it is one way in which a pacific people can satisfy their instinct of aggression. And a law suit in India generally tends to be a long drawn out affair. Bribery is rife in the lower courts—even some of the judges are not unapproachable—and it is useless to take legal action at all unless you are prepared, if necessary, to go to appeal. In the higher courts most of the judges are Europeans and are above suspicion of bribery. This is an expression, not of my prejudices, but of the general opinion prevailing in India and among Indians. I had myself on one occasion to make an application before one of the lower courts, which, rather to my surprise, was summarily rejected. On the following day the Indian judge who had ruled against me met me in the street and accosted me. "Excuse me," he said, "but aren't you a friend of Mrs. X?" I replied that I did know the lady in question. "My dear fellow," said the judge cordially, "why on earth didn't you tell me before? Renew your application to-morrow, and of course I'll grant it." I have told this story to Indian friends of mine, but without arousing either indignation or surprise.

In India there is but little difference between the status of barrister and pleader. Both fulfil the

\*In Bengal the largest source of revenue, after land, is the sale of judicial stamps.—Maj.-Gen. J. F. C. Fuller, in *India in Revolt*.

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functions of barrister and solicitor indiscriminately, both can plead before either high or low courts, and there is no bar to the intending litigant approaching a barrister in the first instance. The only important difference is that an Indian barrister must have been called to the bar in England, whereas a pleader may practise if he is equipped with only local qualifications, which are not difficult to secure. An Indian legal friend of mine once suggested to me that I should go into partnership with him. He was under no illusions as to my knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of law; he was prepared to do all the work required, my part being to give the firm the prestige ensured by a European partner. As far as my "official" qualifications were concerned, he assured me that I could take all the necessary degrees after a month's preparation. Nor do I see any reason to disbelieve this statement. The legal knowledge of many pleaders I have met was negligible; and their professional standards are not high. Even barristers are not impeccable. One, whom I consulted about some private affairs, seriously advised me to go into the box and swear to a statement which we both knew to be fantastically untrue. When I pointed out that this was rank perjury he assured me that I was mistaken. Perjury, he explained, was established only when a witness made two mutually irreconcilable statements in the box. Provided I told one lie and stuck to it, my friend was unable to see any legal or ethical objection.

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The pleader, before he can take his LL.B. degree, must be a Bachelor of Arts; but this in India does not present much difficulty. The standards are almost incredibly low; the examination for the Indian B.A. is certainly no more advanced than our Junior Oxford or Cambridge, and I shrewdly suspect that a goodly proportion of the examiners would be "plucked" at the London Matriculation. In fact the Indian educational system as a whole presents many deficiencies. Not only are the standards set for degree-taking far too low—Indian degrees are notoriously worthless—but it is doubtful whether the whole plan of education in India, for which England must accept the responsibility, is not based on a misunderstanding of the position.

Lord Curzon said with truth, "the man in India who has grasped the educational problem has got nearer to the heart of things than any of his comrades, and he who can offer to us the right educational prescription is the only true physician of the State". Probably it was Curzon who came nearer than any other man to providing that prescription; but the reforms he put into practice were never popular, and but little trace of them remains to-day.

The man who was primarily responsible for the form which education has taken in India was Macaulay, whose insistence on English as the medium of instruction permanently coloured the whole system. Macaulay went to India in 1834 as Law Member of Council, and added to his duties the Presidency of the Committee of Public Instruction.



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His famous Minute of 1835, when he had been barely a year in the country and could hardly have had a very complete grasp of its problems, insisted on English as the language of instruction, as well as the inculcation of European conceptions of science and European ideas. Even at the time there were not wanting those who perceived the inadvisability of such a course; and Mr. B. H. Hodgson, Resident at Khatmandu, with prophetic insight warned the authorities that "so one-sided a system would at the cost of Government rear up a vast class of English-educated young men who would look to political or official careers which the Government would be unable to provide for them" and could result only in "sending forth a host of grandiloquent grumblers, as able to clamour as unable to work". It is difficult to realise that these words, so remarkably applicable to conditions in India to-day, were written nearly a hundred years ago.

Out of India's population of three hundred and twenty millions\* no less than 296,000,000—92½ per cent.—are illiterate, unable to read or write even their own vernaculars. The number who can read or write English, practically the only language available for higher education, is of course much smaller, so that despite the years of work and the large sums of money that have been expended, it is clear that the educational problem has been hardly touched. The actual situation, however, is worse

\*The figures are those of the 1921 Census.

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than these figures imply, for they take no account of the fact that large numbers of children who have attended schools afterwards lapse into illiteracy. Another drawback is that the type of education given is woefully ill-suited to Indian needs. In a predominantly agricultural country practically nothing in the way of technical education is provided, teaching seems to be designed with degree-taking as its sole aim, and there grow up generations of academically-trained youths fit for nothing but the semi-learned or sedentary professions.\* They look to the Government for employment, and they are turned empty away. As a result India, a country which offers untold opportunities for the skilled agriculturist who will apply modern methods to cultivation, is starved for farmers and has a vast and useless body of unemployed would-be doctors, lawyers and journalists. It is these men, expensively half-educated and labouring under the grievance that there is no outlet for their talents, who provide the majority of anti-British agitators and seditionists. We jail them in their thousands, and we never pause to reflect that they are a class which we ourselves have created.

Even the University education given in India is pretentious and lacking in thoroughness. The Indian B.A. as a rule has swallowed an ill-digested mass of facts and more or less assimilated a number

\*In Bengal the percentage of students taking a full-time University course is ten times as great as in England, while only about five per cent. of the total population receives any education at all.

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of half-baked theories which he will defend with skill—for he is a born debater—but the essentials of which he has rarely understood. Anything like a background of general culture is the exception. But it does not matter; once he has acquired a degree he is satisfied. There is still the faint hope of a Government position; and even if that fails there is always the consciousness of the prestige which a degree confers, a prestige so great that even unsuccessful candidates acquire some measure of glory, and many a Babu carries a visiting card which bears, after his name, the flattering inscription, “B.A. (failed)”. I visited an Indian University on one occasion, and in the course of being “shown the sights” I inspected the Art Gallery. I have never seen such an amazing exhibition in my life. I am not for a moment posing as an art critic, but even to my untutored eye it was obvious that many of the works of art (housed, by the way, in a really magnificent building) were the merest daubs. I made no comment, however, until I came across two or three rubbishing coloured photogravures cut out of cheap European magazines and handsomely framed, and I really could not help asking my guide what on earth these things were doing in an art gallery. “Well, you see,” replied my conductor, “I know they’re not art; but they were given to us by Sir —, and it would have been ungracious to refuse.” I wonder how an English university would have responded to a similar gift!

One rather paradoxical effect of the system of

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education in India is to be seen in the fact that, among the educated classes who provide the personnel of the Nationalist Movement, English is practically the sole medium of intercourse. There are in India so many languages and so many thousands of dialects that if there is a *lingua franca* at all it is English. Thus, at the meetings of the National Congress English is practically the only language employed; it is in our own tongue that we hear threats and denunciations thundered at the head of the "Satanic Government". There is no doubt that to-day English is the language of sedition in India.

The police in India, unfortunately, do not command any very general respect or confidence. The personnel, except in the very highest posts, is almost overwhelmingly Indian, and for this reason the authorities are chary of employing the services of the police in quelling communal disturbances; indeed, the calling out of the military in Hindu-Muslim riots is more the rule than the exception. The rank and file of the police are apt to be tyrannous, corrupt and rapacious. This is not altogether surprising. The Indian who enters the police feels that he has behind him the weight of the authority of the Raj; his fellow-countrymen, among whom he was formerly a person of no particular account, are now mere civilians, subject to his orders, which he will enforce, if need be, with blows of the *lathi*. His position, also, presents frequent opportunities for the accepting of bribes, and in many cases he is

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not slow to take advantage of this. The European sergeants, too, are often not above the acceptance of illegal emoluments. They occupy positions of much greater influence and authority than generally fall to the lot of men of their type, and they are apt to become despotic to their subordinates and rapacious in their demands from ignorant civilians who have formed an exaggerated idea of the policeman's powers. I was once informed by a European sergeant of police to whom I had stood a couple of drinks that I might now commit any crime short of murder in his district and he would see that I "got away with it". He was, of course, a liar and a braggart; nevertheless, there was just a sufficient element of truth in his boast to make one feel a measure of discomfort. The senior officers of police are almost without exception men of high character, who carry out their duties with absolute honesty and with as much efficiency as the system will allow. But they are few in numbers, and they are bound to delegate too much of their power to less scrupulous subordinates.

For similar reasons, prison administration in India leaves much to be desired. The jailer wreaks his sweet will on the unhappy prisoner, and the treatment allotted to the latter will depend very largely on the amount of *baksheesh* he is willing or able to produce. I have been told, by men of unimpeachable veracity, horrifying tales of the methods used in some prisons to extract confessions from unwilling prisoners; and one feels that the

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chiefs of the Spanish Inquisition might well have journeyed to India for lessons in the refinements of their art. One very effective method, I believe, is to apply to the prisoner's navel a little cup containing a particular type of burrowing beetle. After a while, I am told, the prisoner confesses. Should he prove still obdurate, however, the cup is applied elsewhere.

All this, of course, refers only to the ordinary prisoner—the villager charged with the theft of a couple of rupees. The treatment accorded to the political prisoner—the man who has done no more than preach sedition and stir up a riot resulting in the loss of dozens of lives—is very different. He is assured of all the comforts of a good hotel—of privacy, good meals, newspapers, and the privilege of entertaining his friends. The late Pandit Motilal Nehru once described to me his experiences in jail. In addition to the comforts already enumerated he had an unlimited supply of cigarettes, and I know that on one occasion he gave a champagne dinner in jail, his "cell" being profusely decorated with flowers. But the Pandit had only been sent to prison because the authorities were afraid of him. Nobody is afraid of the wretched rhyot. So for the seditionist there is champagne and for the petty thief there is the dung-beetle. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is the same thing all over the world.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DÉCLASSÉS

IN a previous chapter I have discussed the caste system among the Hindus, and the way in which the hierarchy of the conquering whites corresponds roughly to the four main divisions of Hinduism. The parallel may be not inaptly pursued a step further. The untouchables—wretched outcastes whose political and economic disabilities are as nothing compared with their social inferiority—are comparable with the Anglo-Indian and the “poor white”. I use the latter term to include that troublesome and not inconsiderable body of Europeans—whether “country-born” or not—who, it may be by reason of sheer ill-fortune, drink, or inherent weakness, have sunk from their proud status of members of the Raj. As is the Brahman to the untouchable, so is the I.C.S.-*wallah* to the *déclassé* European or the Anglo-Indian.

The Anglo-Indian (the term Eurasian is taboo these days) is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. The Europeans proper will have nothing to do with him; and no sensible Anglo-Indian would expose himself to an almost certain rebuff by putting up for membership of any of the big European clubs. At the same time he will cling

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pathetically to his (sometimes almost imperceptible) European origin, and will feel a heartily reciprocated dislike and contempt for his Indian fellow-countrymen. The Indian is always bitterly hurt by the use of the word "native", which he considers (with some reason) to bear a derogatory significance. It is rarely that he hears it from any but an Anglo-Indian or a "poor white"—both of whom are often a shade darker than the Kashmiri or the Pathan.

Admittedly the lot of the Anglo-Indian is a hard one, rejected as he is by the better element—socially—in both communities. But before flying into a passion of indignation at the wrongs done to him, it is as well to consider how far they are deserved, and how far they are self-inflicted.

To take the second point first, the Anglo-Indian has, at any rate up to recent years, made a serious tactical blunder in insisting on endeavouring to throw in his lot, socially and politically, with the Europeans instead of with his darker-skinned fellow-countrymen. To-day this error is being to some degree rectified, and the credit for leading the Anglo-Indian community to a juster estimate of their position and their prospects is due to a large extent to Sir H. Gidney, who for a number of years has ably looked after their interests in the Legislative Assembly.

Anglo-Indians have in the past been disposed to stress unduly their racial bond with Europe and to overlook their equally strong ties of blood with India, as well as their citizenship of and presumably



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permanent residence in that country. Naturally this voluntarily alien section of the community is regarded with something less than enthusiasm, particularly by nationally-minded Indians. The Indian Nationalist is prepared to tolerate the admittedly alien Englishman who comes to work for a few years in the country and then to retire and rest on his laurels at Bournemouth or Eastbourne. He is prepared to welcome the alien of any nationality who will work in and for India as an Indian—B. G. Horniman and C. F. Andrews, to name only two examples, stand higher in Indian estimation than many of the *pukka* Indian leaders. But he does ask the Anglo-Indian and the domiciled European either to throw in their lot fully with the Indians or else to regard themselves solely in the light of temporary and transmigratory visitors. Let them class themselves simply as Indians or simply as foreigners.

This the Anglo-Indians have, at any rate in the past, been unwilling to do. Nobody suggests that the son of an English gentleman should fraternise with the *badmashes* of the bazar, any more than it is suggested that the son of an Indian Rajah should do so. Social distinctions can, and in society as it is at present organised I suppose must, be maintained. But so long as Anglo-Indians decline to establish contact with Indians of equivalent social standing and prefer to remain the unwanted "hangers-on" of the European community, in the unpleasant and undignified position of poor relations, so long must

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they expect hostility and even contempt from the Indians. It is not to be expected that a high-caste Brahman, with whose family learning has for centuries been the hall-mark of gentility, will relish the airs of superiority of a putty-coloured illiterate with nothing but his dubious descent to recommend him. Let it not be supposed that I advance the foregoing as a fair description of the average Anglo-Indian. Many of them are men of culture, with a sincere and constructive devotion to their country. But the type does exist; and it is just that type which, by a totally unwarranted assumption of racial superiority, does much to exacerbate Indian opinion.

It must be admitted, too, that Indian and European blood do not "mix well". Many of my Indian and Anglo-Indian friends would be prepared to grant this, as well as the fact that the average European is not improved by long residence in the tropics. I am not for the moment speaking of the distressing psychological results that frequently follow the appointment of callow youths to positions of authority in which they exercise almost unchecked dominion over the destinies of hundreds of passively phlegmatic and non-resisting "natives". There are physical effects, obvious to all who have lived in the East, that are even more serious. All parents who are able by any financial sacrifice to do so send their children home during the critical formative years of their youth. This is not done merely to avoid the acquisition of that distressingly

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infectious *chi-chi* accent and intonation. They know that the child who grows up in India grows up weedy, lanky and lacking in stamina. And the deleterious effect is not confined to children, though it may be more easily perceptible in them.

It is not a statement that will be pleasing to many Anglo-Indians and domiciled Europeans, but my experience has led me definitely to the view that the European and the Eurasian who grow up in India are generally weak in moral as well as in physical fibre—that they lack moral strength just as they lack physical endurance. It is not mere prejudice that makes the employer in India prefer an Englishman from home to an Anglo-Indian or a domiciled European. He knows that as a general rule the former will be more trustworthy, more hard-working. For this reason practically all employers of high-class labour in India prefer to engage their staffs in England. A *pukka* European who is unemployed in India is in so many cases unemployable. It is almost proverbial that an Englishman in India who wishes to secure employment in that country must come to England to do so.

In "The Agra Double Murder", an account of a *cause célèbre* which was tried at Allahabad in 1913, Sir Cecil Walsh, K.C., throws a good deal of light on Anglo-Indian mentality. Except that she was a murderess—and I do not suggest that there is a larger percentage of murderers among Anglo-Indians than among any other community—

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Mrs. Fullam, who conspired with her paramour to murder her husband and her accomplice's wife, may be taken as typical of the class I am dealing with (she was, as a matter of fact, a domiciled European, born and bred in India). Sir Cecil Walsh finds her a strange mixture of contradictions; I submit that nearly all those contradictions (barring, of course, her exceptional turpitude) are characteristic of her class.

A woman of some refinement of mind, she was yet so unrestrained in her passions that many of her letters to her lover were unprintable. Sincerely religious, she yet saw no inconsistency between her criminal commerce with her lover (to say nothing of the murder of her husband) and her deep piety. In one of the letters in which she described how she had administered poison to her husband she apologised for not having written the previous day, explaining that she was unable to do so because it was Sunday! She was at the same time supremely confident of her own charms and madly jealous of every woman to whom her lover spoke. Her letters, though by no means devoid of literary quality, were sprinkled with the most nauseating terms of endearment—"lovey-baccha", "precious darling" and kindred imbecilities. She explained that when she accorded to her husband his normal marital rights, she was guilty of no disloyalty to her lover, because "she thought of him (the lover) all the time"! For all these reasons Sir Cecil found her "incomprehensible". She was, I suggest,

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incomprehensible only to one who knows nothing of the class and community from which she sprang.

There are thousands of Mrs. Fullams, in all but her murderous propensities, in India to-day. Certainly her unfaithfulness to her husband was no very extraordinary trait. The majority of Anglo-Indians have but little conception of the sanctity of the marriage tie; even Sir Cecil Walsh observes that "in the society in which the Fullams and Clarks lived there is a strange absence of that moral pressure, which, for the want of a better name, is called 'public opinion'."

In sexual relationships they are casual to a degree, though they observe the "colour bar" rigorously. Anglo-Indian girls mature early, and though they are apt to run to fat in the thirties, at eighteen or nineteen they are often extremely attractive. Many a young Englishman, lured to an indiscretion by the kallipygian charms of some dark-eyed Eurasian girl, has found himself, after an embarrassing interview with her rather duskier mamma, committed to the founding of yet another Anglo-Indian family. For the *chi-chi* wench, despite her initial acquiescence, becomes quite surprisingly careful of her good name when there is the chance of a "real European" husband to be hooked. Many a promising career in India has been ruined in this way by a visit to the Railway Institute.

It is the Railway Institute that forms the nucleus of social life among the *déclassé* in India. Nothing corresponding to it exists in the West. Socially the

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Institute is, roughly speaking, on a par with the Y.M.C.A., but it differs in many important particulars from that institution. Neither women nor alcohol are barred—in fact those two constitute the main allurements. A dance at the Institute is always a colourful event. There will be festoons, coloured lights, fortune tellers, and drinks galore. There will be plenty of light-footed if maturely-busted *chi-chi* girls who dance divinely and drink quite astonishing quantities of whiskey without apparent effect, as well as a rather less pleasing contingent of their brothers, who seem to hold their liquor far less adequately, so that the evening not infrequently ends in a free fight, in which bottles fly in all directions and—miraculously enough—nobody ever gets hurt. There will be a few male (but no female) representatives of the *sahiblog* proper; sometimes even a Deputy Commissioner off duty treads the light fantastic toe at an Institute dance. But these are hard-bitten veterans; they are not likely to be trapped by the allurements of Anglo-Indian girls. Finally there will be a few of the younger European commercial community—under-managers at the larger stores and so forth—and perhaps one or two youngsters of higher social standing, slightly tipsy and out for a bit of fun. All the ingredients of a hectic evening, in fact; and many a hectic evening have I seen at the Railway Institutes in Delhi and other stations.

The reason why it is the Railway Institute that has come to be the social nucleus of the Anglo-

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Indian and Domiciled European community is that they have practically monopolised all middle-grade appointments in the Railways, Posts and Telegraphs, and as far the largest numbers are employed by the Railways, there is always a veritable colony of these people to be found at the local Railway Institute or at the station buffet. Many of them I have known and many have I found to be, from Western standards, at least as full of inconsistencies as was the famous Mrs. Fullam.

There was one, the holder of a fairly senior appointment in Government service, who ran one of the strangest *ménages* it has been my lot to come across. A man of enormous physique, almost as broad as he was long, he was sexually insatiable and had hordes of mistresses, mainly *chi-chi* girls from fourteen to seventeen years of age. He was devoted to his wife and treated her with the most tender consideration in all respects save one—she was, I should think, almost the only eligible woman in the station with whom he had no sexual affairs. There was a child of the marriage; but how it was procreated remains a mystery. A devout Roman Catholic, he displayed on one wall of his bedroom a statuette of the Virgin Mary with a perpetual light, and on the other wall a collection of "Paris postcards". The wife maintained two more or less permanent *liaisons*, of which her husband can hardly have been unaware, for both were conducted with an almost ludicrous lack of reticence. One

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(which may have been dictated by reasons of policy, since I have reason to know the lady's affections were not deeply involved) was with a senior officer in the same service. The other was with a subordinate official, an uncouth coffee-coloured ruffian of dubious descent, whom she adored. All the parties honoured me with their confidence—which, as I have slightly distorted the circumstances, has not been abused. It was an embarrassing situation, as I was in constant expectation of an explosion. I believe now that I need not have worried. Despite Mrs. Fullam, it is but rarely that the promiscuities of the *déclassé* culminate in what one would imagine to be their logical conclusion.

Even more remarkable was the case of a railwayman I knew, who also poured out to me the innermost secrets of his soul. He had married a woman for whom he professed to have the highest admiration and regard, but with whom he found it impossible to live. There was one child. At this time he was desperately enamoured of a young lady who, although still in her eighteenth year, was of so altruistic a disposition that she had already bestowed tokens of her favour on nearly every available young man in the station—a fact of which her adorer quite placidly admitted his knowledge. In order to legalise his union with this charming girl, my friend was anxious to divorce or be divorced by his present wife—either alternative would be equally satisfactory to him. Divorce proceedings



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had been brought, unsuccessfully, by the wife two years previously, and a year later my friend also pleaded for a dissolution of the marriage but failed to secure it. At the time I am speaking of, it had been arranged that the wife should make a third attempt; and in order to assist her, her spouse was busily engaged in frequenting the "red lamp" quarter in the endeavour to acquire a disease, because he believed that would make her task easier! In a conversation with me he bewailed his lack of success in this praiseworthy endeavour; but subsequently he achieved his desire in so full a measure as permanently to blast his hopes in other directions.

Although the two instances I have cited must, to Western readers, appear almost like the records of psycho-pathological cases; anyone who knows the Anglo-Indian community in India at all intimately will testify that they are by no means unique. Uncontrolled, and with a mentality that is only too frequently both sub-normal and perverted, they constitute a factor in the Indian problem which, although it is not at present receiving much attention, will prove by no means easy to solve.

It is startling and a little distressing to observe how closely the domiciled European, born and bred in India—the type disdainfully referred to by the *pukka* European as "country-born"—often come to resemble the Eurasian. The *chi-chi* accent is so easily acquired that, as I have already remarked, even the children of *pukka* Europeans can hardly

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escape the infection unless they receive their schooling at home. But even apart from this, exposure to Indian suns darkens the complexion very noticeably in one generation, and the rank, weedy growth characteristic of tropical vegetation is apparent almost as markedly among the domiciled European fauna. Also, so many of them fall a victim to the lure of the bottle. It does not take long for the *chota peg* to become a *burra peg* and to multiply in number until whiskey has become a necessity even in the forbidden hours before sundown. One such *declassé* European I knew spent his life in a state of practically continuous intoxication, maudlin and truculent by turns. He was a man of considerable intellectual ability, but had drunk away his opportunities, his money and the greater part of his brains. He was never without a bottle of whiskey except when, at times of great financial stress, his credit was cut off, and then his condition became pitiable.

It is easy to blame these wretched victims to a type of existence to which they are physically and mentally unsuited; but there are many excuses that may be pleaded in their favour. To any European who lives in India drink is and must be a temptation. In a tropical climate liquid refreshment is more necessary, and is necessary in greater quantities, than in these cooler regions; and furthermore, after a gruelling day with the temperature hovering round the 120 mark, the tonic properties of whiskey make it almost a necessity at sundown.

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It is fatally easy for that "just one more" to become two or three; to have just one "liver" at tiffin time; to find that after a heavy night one cannot face the day's routine without a peg before breakfast. Then perhaps a touch of the sun, and a few extra pegs to help the difficult period of convalescence.

When we take the case of a European born in India, who finds it far less easy than others to establish social contacts and who faces the possibility of a rebuff in doing so, whose attendance at the principal club is tacitly discouraged, who is unwanted in European society, unsuited to Indian society, and reluctant to hobnob with the Anglo-Indians, is it surprising that he should find his chief solace in the bottle, or that, lacking as he so often is in moral and physical stamina, he should succumb so easily and so rapidly to its insidious poison? If Mr. Gandhi ever succeeds in his campaign for prohibition, he will have rendered a greater service to Europeans in India than to his own countrymen.

In the buffet bars and the lower-class restaurants you will always find a selection of these rather pathetic derelicts. What more natural? In the clubs they are, at best, tolerated; in these places, where the *clientèle* is mainly Anglo-Indian, they are "somebodies"—almost deferred to. And it is a characteristic of the *déclassé* that he would rather be a king among beggars than a beggar among kings.

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There is, however, no problem—except an individual problem—of the domiciled European. In the course of time he either dies or marries an Indian or Eurasian and becomes merged in the Anglo-Indian community. It is the latter who are growing in numbers, and who do constitute a problem of some urgency. At times one feels almost tempted to sympathise with the point of view of a Tommy whom I once heard threaten, in the course of an argument with an Anglo-Indian, to “stop my pals making the likes of you!”

## CHAPTER XI

### “SWARAJ”

BEFORE dealing with the practical difficulties in the way of the realisation of *Swaraj*, it is necessary to consider the question of the ethical basis of the Indian demand for self-government. By what right are the British in India at all; by what right do they enforce their rule over the inhabitants of the country; what are Britain's responsibilities, and what her just privileges, in India? Before we can answer these questions we must review briefly the incidents that led to the establishment of the British Raj in India, the principles on which that rule is based, and the pledges we have given in respect of our future intentions.

The first Englishmen who landed in India came there simply as a matter of business, to exploit a new country. The eyes of the world were turned to the East in the search for new markets for the expansion of trade, and India, with its vast natural resources, seemed to promise untold wealth to the merchant adventurers of the Elizabethan period. The first Europeans who attempted to take advantage of the possibilities of Indian trade were the Portuguese, who had established a number of trading centres in the country during the sixteenth

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century. The British East India Company was formed in 1599, but in its early days its operations were on a relatively small scale. During the first half of the seventeenth century the Dutch held naval supremacy in the Eastern waters, and that fact was of great assistance to them in fostering their trade with India; Dutch enterprise in India was at this time on a larger scale and more adequately supported by the Government than our own. A French Company had been formed in 1611, and the French began to be serious rivals for Indian trade when a larger and more ambitious Company was started by Colbert in 1664.

The East India Company was in the first instance nothing more than a trading venture. Nobody foresaw that the time would come when it would be necessary for the British Government to take over the administration of Indian affairs; nobody realised that it would be impossible to restrict the Company's activities for long to purely commercial matters. Yet one feels that such a development might well have been foreseen. Here was a small body of English traders, settling in a country with no central administration and no machinery for the peaceful enforcement of law and order. It must have been obvious that the agents whom the Company sent out to India would have to organise means of defending the Company's property, that it would be necessary for them to raise and equip armed troops, and that they would inevitably be forced into the position of entering

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into offensive and defensive alliances with native potentates. From this it was but a step to the Company's becoming, in the words of Burke, "a State in the disguise of a merchant".

During the first century and a half of the existence of the East India Company, its activities were, or were designed to be, purely commercial. But as time went on, the impossibility of confining its activities to trading became more and more apparent. The Charter granted in 1661 gave the Company the power to appoint Governors with civil and criminal jurisdiction, to fit out ships with munitions and crews, to organise armed forces, and to make war or conclude peace with peoples other than Christian. Here are already some rather startling activities to be included in the scope of a trading concern. In 1677 they were granted the right to coin money, and in 1683 they were permitted to exercise martial law. It is difficult to quarrel with Burke's statement that this was a delegation to the Company of "the whole power and sovereignty of the Kingdom".

The acceptance by Clive of the *Diwanni* of Bengal in 1765 was a landmark in the history of the Company; it was now impossible to pretend that its activities were even in theory confined to trading. It became clear that some parliamentary control of the Company was desirable, and the Regulating Act of 1773 provided for this. Then in 1784 Pitt's famous India Act transferred political control from the Company to a Ministerial Board responsible

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to Parliament. The Bill was not passed without some opposition; but the continual malpractices of the Company's agents, their tyranny and dishonesty, had rendered it unavoidable. From this time the Company in Leadenhall Street restricted itself to commercial affairs; the commercial monopoly was finally abolished in 1813, and the Company's Charter was renewed for the last time in 1853. After the Mutiny in 1857 the Company was wound up, and in 1858 British India passed under the direct government of the Crown.

It is clear that the inclusion of India in the Empire was the result of nobody's far-seeing policy; we blundered into it, as we have blundered into so many things. The agents of the Company in its early days, simple merchant adventurers who had no aim or ambition but to enrich the Company and themselves, found themselves, willy-nilly, exercising very considerable political power and controlling large military forces. They were not, neither did they pretend to be, statesmen; they were not by education, by upbringing, nor even by inclination fitted to wield the powers that fell to them. It is not surprising that corruption, extortion and bribery were rife, that men who had gone to India merely to make money should be to some extent unscrupulous in their methods of making it. In those days the average time between sending a despatch from England to India and getting an answer was in the vicinity of eighteen months; and the settlers had ample opportunity for enriching themselves without



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effective control from Leadenhall Street. Even in the days of Clive and of Warren Hastings, when some sort of Parliamentary control had been established, corruption continued. In the words of Macaulay, "rapacity, luxury, and the spirit of insubordination spread from the Civil Service to the officers of the army, and from the officers to the soldiers. The evil continued to grow till every mess-room became the seat of conspiracy and cabal, and till the Sepoys could be kept in order only by wholesale executions". It is not a picture that should fill any Englishman with pride, but there can be no doubt that it faithfully reflects conditions prevailing in a period when Hastings sold British troops to Sujah Dowlah for the subjugation of the Rohillas and tortured the servants of the Begums of Oudh to extort contributions to the Company's coffers. To quote Macaulay again, "there was an interval between the time at which they (the Indians) became our subjects, and the time at which we began to reflect that we were bound to discharge towards them the duties of rulers".

Certainly the early agents of the Company in India, corrupt though they may have been, were not dishonest enough to put forward the proposition that we were in India for India's good. The early English traders went to the country simply to make money; they found themselves, without any very conscious efforts in that direction, more or less compelled to take over considerable administrative powers; and they misused those powers so sorely

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that the Government was forced to intervene. After the Mutiny, when the Crown was in direct control of the country, promises were made regarding the way in which India should be governed and the steps that should be taken to give the inhabitants a measure of autonomy.

England's constitutional right in India, therefore, is based simply and solely on the old, well-established and perfectly sound right of conquest. I have heard this statement denied, on the grounds that so small a body of troops could not possibly have conquered a vast country, and that such conquests as were won were achieved by alliances with native princes and with the help of native troops. There seems but little force in the objection, however. England's victories over France which were won with the aid of Burgundy were nevertheless victories, and the territories that were acquired were held by right of conquest, in conformity with international laws. Also there is but little point in claiming that battles that have in fact been won could not have been won. The history of the English wars in India has conclusively proved that even the largest armies of native troops cannot stand against smaller but well-trained and well-armed bodies under efficient European leadership. Had India been a united country, with numerous and well-disciplined forces under the command of a natural leader who could call on the affection and the patriotic feeling of his people, the situation would have been entirely different. But this was far from

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being the case. The collapse of the Moghul Empire had left India disunited, a crowd of warring and incompatible peoples, for the most part shamefully misgoverned by vicious petty tyrants, and with no conception of the solidarity characteristic of a nation. Without belittling for a moment the military genius of Clive, Coote, and other British generals in India, it is nevertheless clear that their task was a far easier one than it appeared.

We are in India, then, by right of conquest. We defeated native insurgents; we drove out the French and other European Powers that challenged our supremacy. Nevertheless, we still owe a duty to those whom we have brought under our subjection. The days when the conqueror could adopt *vae victis* as his motto are over. We owe to India good government, and government designed primarily for the furtherance of India's welfare. We also owe to India that, step by step and as far as possible, she shall advance along the road to self-government. But this last debt, be it understood, we owe simply and solely because we, voluntarily and without compulsion, promised it, as a free gift, to the Indian peoples. It is not a contractual obligation; it is merely the obligation that rests upon us to fulfil our pledged word.

The question also arises, to whom was this promise of a gradual granting of autonomy given? The conquest of India differed in important respects from the conquest of any other country. There was no central administration with which to treat, no

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representative of the people of India who could on their behalf make submission or sue for terms. The country was split up into warring factions; the population consisted of peoples widely differing in race, in mental make-up, in wealth and in physical prowess, ready at the least provocation or on no provocation at all to fly at each other's throats.\* Our first duty, clearly, was to establish the *Pax Britannica*; after that we had to discover—or to create—a representative body with which we could treat. The Indian National Congress claims to be that body. If its claim can be substantiated, then it is the British who have created the Indian nation; for the Congress is definitely a product—if only a by-product—of British rule in India.

The National Congress met for the first time in December, 1885, twenty-seven years after India had come “officially” under British dominion, and more than a hundred years after the British Parliament had been exercising some measure of control over the destinies of the country. At this time there was far from being any general dissatisfaction with British rule; on the contrary, the leaders of the Congress united in congratulating themselves and each other on being under such wise and benevolent tutelage. It was not until 1907 that the Congress began to develop into an anti-British organisation, and the first Indian Nationalist of any importance

\*Even Indian Nationalists admit this fact. In *India: Peace or War?* C. S. Ranga Iyer says: “A united India under one government has not been known to India's past.”

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to be charged with sedition was Tillak, who was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in 1908. Before we can grasp the position at all we must try to understand, first, to what extent is the Congress claim to speak for the Indian people justified, and second, what has caused this comparatively sudden *volte face*; what has led the spokesmen of the Indian National Congress, from regarding the British Raj as a boon and a blessing, to denounce it, in the famous words of Mr. Gandhi, as the "Satanic Government"?

The deplorably low standard of general education in India and the multiplicity of languages and dialects employed render any definite expression of the national will—if, in such circumstances, a national will can be said to exist—a matter of extreme difficulty. The Indian National Congress, as many of its leaders admit, represents only the educated minority of Indians, the English-speaking Vakils and Babus. The ryot is dumb, inarticulate. He is not only unable to express his views; he is incapable of forming any political opinions that would be worthy of consideration. Although, as Mr. Gandhi confesses, the Congress is unable to speak for the people of India as a whole,\* it yet does voice the aspirations of that relatively small body who have views to express, and to that extent

\*"We, the educated classes, have received our education through a foreign tongue. We have therefore not reacted on the masses. We want to represent the masses, but we fail. They recognise us not much more than they recognise the English officers. Their hearts are an open book to neither. Their aspirations are not ours."—Mahatma Gandhi.

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it is representative. It is as representative as any pseudo-democratic body in India can be. If the Congress does not speak for India, then certainly no other body does so. Either we must accept the voice of the Congress as the voice of India, or else we must say that India is dumb, that we do not know what she wants and we propose to give her what we think is good for her.

The second alternative, though apparently reasonable enough, must land us in a dilemma. We have promised, and repeatedly reaffirmed that promise, that India shall progress by gradual stages along the road to self-government. Clearly that cannot mean the setting up of some native Prince as an absolute potentate, an empirically chosen successor to the Moghuls, to unite these widely differing and mutually hostile peoples under the banner of one ruler. It must, if it means anything at all, intend some system of federation, with a central government responsible to a democratic electorate. We must assume that the nucleus of such an electorate exists—as indeed it does, among the Congress supporters—and I fail to see how we can avoid accepting the voice of the Congress as the voice of India, in so far as India is vocal at all.

That brings us to our second problem: why is India, to the extent that she is represented by the Congress, so overwhelmingly hostile to the British administration? For this there are a number of reasons. Chief among them I believe to be a certain lack of honesty in our dealings with the Indian

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people. We have promised more than we have performed. Admittedly it has not always been possible to carry out our promises; admittedly some of those promises are mutually incompatible.\* But that is a point that should have been considered before the promises were made.

We have, I feel, laid rather too much stress on the altruism of all our motives in India. We have insisted so long and so often that we are in India simply and solely for India's good that, rather to our embarrassment, Indians have come to believe it. Or perhaps they do not really believe it, but they have been astute enough to take us at our word. Mr. Gladstone, with incredible *gaucherie*, said: "Our title to be in India depends on a first condition, that our being there is profitable to the Indian nations; and on a second condition, that we can make them see and understand it to be profitable." Was ever an impregnable position thrown so wide open to assault? Indian politicians have only to reply, as they do reply: "We do not see the British connection to be profitable," and it is difficult to find any way in which the discussion can be continued. India points to the fact that in a country admitted to be enormously rich in mineral wealth and in produce the inhabitants are miserably poor; India sees that the money made by Englishmen in the country is invariably spent outside its

\*The conflicting pledges given to British Indian leaders and to the Princes provide an instance of this, to which I shall refer in the chapter on "The Other India".

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borders. We have, of course, our reply to these charges. We have given India 40,000 miles of railways, 59,000 miles of surfaced roads, and 67,000 miles of canals. And although these were built with Indian money and for our own purposes, it is undeniable that India has derived some advantage from them. For the benefits we have conferred on India we ask (very reasonably, if only we were and always had been honest about it) some *quid pro quo* in the way of preferential treatment in trade. But Mr. Gandhi, bearing all our generous declarations in mind, says: “It is her (England’s) declared policy that India is to be held in trust for the Indian people. If this be true, Lancashire must stand aside.” How can one quarrel with so eminently logical a conclusion? Is it not time we told India frankly that these things are said because they sound well on election platforms, that as far as practical politics are concerned they mean less than nothing at all, and that we are in India primarily for our own benefit, though we will give her a square deal as long as she behaves herself? If we could clear the air with some such honest declaration as this I believe the situation would improve miraculously and that instead of the airy fantasies of the Round Table Conferences we could get down to real business, conducted reasonably and on a basis of reality by people who understand each other’s aims and motives.

At present the Nationalist Opposition, which



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exercises an effective majority in the Legislative Assembly, is actively hostile to the British Raj. Roughly the composition of the Assembly is as follows:—

Nominated (including 16 officials)	41
Swarajists	40
Nationalist Party	20
Muslim Central Party	17
Independent (led by Mr. Jinnah)	16
Europeans	10

The Europeans normally vote with the Government; the Swarajists and the Nationalist Party are permanently in opposition; while the Muslim Party and Mr. Jinnah's group are to be found sometimes in one lobby, sometimes in the other. In effect the anti-Government parties can always defeat a measure if they desire to do so.

Swarajist tactics are purely obstructionist, and if the Assembly were run on lines anything like those of the House of Commons no business would ever be transacted at all. In fact, however, the Assembly is little more than a debating society. The Government brings forward a measure, it is defeated in the Assembly, and it is "certified" by the Governor-General. In other words, the Indian representatives are permitted to voice their objections to a Bill, but they cannot prevent it being passed into law. One must admit that it is difficult to see what other procedure could be adopted. Here, however, we have all the ingredients of another fruitless and undignified controversy: the

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“official” element claim that the Swarajists cannot be trusted with any real power because they obstruct every measure; the Swarajists insist that they obstruct because they are admitted to the Assembly only to give a spurious appearance of democracy to the Government’s autocratic procedure. It is not easy to deny some measure of cogency to either argument. Certainly the Swarajists are justified in claiming that they are, on occasion, treated with scant courtesy. I have been present when a Swarajist member has put to an official a question in the usual form, “Is the Hon. Member aware that. . .”, to be answered, amid laughter, with the contemptuous monosyllable, “Yes”.

Many Indian leaders decline to lend themselves to what they describe as the farce of Indian representation in the Assembly, and the Congress Party have several times boycotted the elections. Much political work is done by Indian leaders who will have nothing to do with the present administrative machine, or who, like Mr. Gandhi, prefer to deal with the authorities by more or less private negotiation rather than through the normal political channels. At Indian Nationalist meetings the parliamentary representatives often take a very secondary place beside leaders of whom the Government has no “official” cognisance.

I have attended Indian political meetings in Delhi and elsewhere, and have always found the proceedings to be far less lethal than the reports published in the newspapers next day would lead

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one to imagine. I remember one in particular, which seemed to me to be conducted with a decorum verging on dullness, and which I was surprised to hear described subsequently as "riotous". I did see one man push another with the flat part of a *lathi*, and I observed that the assailant's cap fell off, but so far as I am aware that was the nearest approach to a casualty. I was myself the only European present in a crowd of several thousand Indian Nationalists, and although constitutionally timid to the verge of cowardice, I cannot say that I felt the slightest apprehension.

When symptoms of rioting do become apparent at a Nationalist meeting, the task of the police is an extremely difficult one. They must show firmness while trying up to the last minute to avoid anything that may be construed as violence, for one broken head among the Congress supporters will inevitably lead to interpellations in the Assembly, accusations of "terrorism", and demands for an enquiry into police administration. The Indian Nationalist has a passionate desire to be a martyr. Let a *lathi* fall on his shoulders, and he is a hero who has fought and bled for the Motherland. During one rather stormy scene that occurred at Lucknow, in which Lala Lajpat Rai was involved, the Punjab leader was, I believe by accident, struck lightly with a *lathi*. He had been in ill-health for some time, and he died a few days later from heart failure. It cannot be seriously supposed that the "injury" he had received had the slightest effect in causing

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his death; but for months the Indian Press hurled denunciations at the Satanic Government that had connived at—nay, conspired to bring about—the murder of the Lion of the Punjab!

There was a certain amount of rioting in Delhi while I was there, and the authorities decided, as a “precautionary measure”, to arrest a number of the principal local Nationalist leaders. I have never seen such farcical proceedings in my life. A list of the “wanted men” (all of whom were well-known citizens and available at their private residences) was supplied to the police, who decided, with deplorable lack of judgment, to make the arrests at a Nationalist meeting that was to be held that afternoon. I went along to see the fun. Thousands of people turned up at the meeting; the unfortunate police officer in charge had about as much chance of selecting thirty odd culprits out of that crowd as of extracting the proverbial needle from a haystack. At length, however, he was fortunate enough to see one of Mr. Gandhi’s sons, who was “on the list”. His assistance was invoked, and he consented to help the police. He mounted on a cart and announced: “The following gentlemen are requested to present themselves for arrest. . . .” As he read the names, voices replied “Here . . . Here”; and one by one the desperate criminals detached themselves from the crowd and were taken into custody. Finally Mr. Gandhi also surrendered to the police, apologising for the fact that one or two of those whose names were on the

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list had apparently been prevented from attending the meeting. The police van then drove off. The majesty of the law had been vindicated.

That evening I was to dine with Hussein and several of his Nationalist friends. Asaf Ali, a prominent Mohammedan Swarajist, was to be among the guests, but his presence seemed doubtful; he was on the list of wanted criminals but had not attended the afternoon meeting. Asaf Ali did arrive, however, and we found that he knew nothing about the matter. On hearing our news he at once telephoned the Superintendent of Police. I could hear the conversation from where I sat; it was cordial in the extreme. Apparently it had been decided that, at any rate for the time being, Asaf Ali should retain his liberty. The criminal's last words to the sleuth before hanging up the receiver were: "Well, cheeroh, old chap. Look me up some time."

Then we sat down to dinner. It was a very pleasant party indeed; I was dining with cultured, intelligent gentlefolk, and we discussed almost everything under the sun except politics. Some of the guests were emancipated from the *pardah* system, so the company included two ladies. During the evening it appeared in conversation that I was the only member of the party present who had never been to prison. However, they were all very nice to me about it and tried not to make me feel my humiliation too much.

## CHAPTER XII

### POLITICAL PERSONALITIES

WHATEVER may be the practical effect of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, there is no denying the fact that a full-dress debate in the Council Chamber provides a colourful spectacle. The interior of the building is imposing, far more so than the exterior, which is squat and a little reminiscent of a pancake. But in the Chamber itself one forgets that. It is a large, circular apartment, surrounded by the various galleries for the public and other visitors. Just below the Press Gallery sits the Speaker—during my time the late Mr. V. J. Patel, the first Indian Speaker to hold office, who conducted the proceedings of the Assembly with dignity and decorum, but who used an elfish sense of humour for the purpose of having many a sly “dig” at the Government. The official benches are on his right, the Swarajists on his left; at the opposite end of the Chamber are the cross-benches, where Mr. Jinnah’s group and the other “doubtfuls” have their seats. Always there is the steady and not unpleasant drone of the electric *punkahs*, which are mounted on tall stands instead of hanging in the usual manner from the ceiling.

Most of the Indian representatives dress in

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*khaddar* (Indian woven cloth) and the Gandhi cap. They wear the *dhoti* and a kind of loose, white cloak, rather like the Roman toga. Many of them, particularly those of fairer complexion, are notably of the Roman type; the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, for example, who was at that time the recognised leader of the Swarajist Party, might well have passed for a Senator in the Roman forum. He was a Kashmiri, and no darker than the average Englishman.

Hussein had been an intimate friend of the Nehrus for many years, and through his introduction I met most of the Nehru family at the home of Brijlal Nehru in New Delhi. Brijlal was not a non-co-operator—in fact he held a Government appointment; but this fact did not in any way mar the family friendship. Motilal was at this time one of the most influential men in India. He was a barrister by profession, and an extremely successful one; but he gave up practice for a time when the non-co-operation movement was launched in 1921. He spoke English perfectly, and, despite his devotion to the Swarajist cause, he had an affection for European ways of life and the little luxuries which the West has introduced to the East. Many of the rank and file among the Nationalists were inclined to distrust him on that account; they found it difficult to believe that one who was a sincere worker for *Swaraj* could yet honestly prefer Egyptian cigarettes to *pan*. Yet Motilal did prefer tobacco to betel-nut; he liked to sit back in his comfortable

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arm-chair with a box of imported cigarettes at his elbow, adjust the folds of his cloak of *khaddar*, and expatiate on the evils of the British rule. Nor do I, for my part, find anything inconsistent in his attitude. Dislike of British administration need not imply a boycott of all European products; and the Pandit was never a whole-hearted adherent of Mr. Gandhi's *Swadeshi* movement.

All the Nehrus I met were charming, cultured people, who lived and entertained according to Western standards and who had a large circle of European friends. Motilal, while detesting everything for which I stood and abhorring the policy of the paper I conducted, was nevertheless the essence of cordiality to me personally, and I found the conversations I had with him pleasurable as well as stimulating. Without for a moment doubting the sincerity of the Pandit's devotion to the cause to which he had given his adherence, I yet formed the opinion that he was more the politician as we understand the term than the patriot pure and simple. Like other members of the Swarajist Party, he boycotted the Viceregal social functions; but I believe he had been more or less forced into this position by his colleagues, and that, deep down, he hungered for the flesh-pots of the West. At Allahabad, where the palatial home of the Nehrus was one of the sights of the United Provinces, he used to entertain on a princely scale; he would stick religiously to *khaddar* and to his *dhoti*, but his wine-cellar would not have disgraced an English Cabinet



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Minister—and would have been beyond the means of many of them. Pandit Nehru was a moderate by disposition; I have no doubt that he would have been happiest in assisting to work the Reforms; but, like so many Indian leaders, he found the machine he had helped to create running away with him. He had become a revolutionary *malgré lui*.

Motilal's son, Jawarharlal, now President of the National Congress, is of a totally different type. Educated in the West, he too has acquired all the Western niceties of comportment, he, too, is charming to meet and to talk to, and he has a host of English friends whom he entertains and with whom he converses on topics of general culture. But in the eyes of Jawarharlal shines the light of the fanatic. He is an irreconcilable; he holds the British rule to be utterly and irredeemably bad, to be tyranny of the most soul-killing description, and he would shrink from nothing to be rid of it. His sincerity is really almost terrifying to witness. One does not gather this from a first interview with Jawarharlal; he is mild-mannered, gentle, the typical student. But his studies have taken a dangerous turn. He paid a visit to Russia, and his experiences of Communism in practice fired his imagination with the dream of a Soviet India. Jawarharlal Nehru is that most dangerous of all types, the energetic visionary, the practical idealist. His sincerity is hardly less terrifying than his ruthlessness. He has no dislike for individual Englishmen,

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but I think that if he thought the assassination of every Englishman in India to be a necessary preliminary to India's freedom he would not shrink from ordering the massacre. I like Jawarharlal, I respect his views and I enjoy his company; but I must admit that I feel more comfortable when he is in jail (as he generally is).

But if the authorities think that they will break Nehru's spirit by jailing him they are woefully mistaken. Prison will move him neither to compromise nor even to increased hostility. He is indifferent to physical suffering; brought up in the lap of luxury and with all the comforts that money can buy, he yet "on principle" travels third-class on the railways. That, to the Englishman, may sound a small thing, as in this country it would be. But in India the horrors of third-class travel are not easily to be contemplated. Herded together like cattle on a journey that may last a couple of days, without sanitary conveniences or an adequate water supply, and exposed to grilling heat, dust, flies, vermin and a hundred other inconveniences, Jawarharlal will sit patient and uncomplaining. It is but a foretaste of the martyrdom for which he is prepared, for which he probably hopes, and which he may quite conceivably get. Meanwhile it will add venom to his tongue when he denounces the iniquities of the abominable Raj. Jawarharlal, by the way, has written two books. One is a study of conditions in Soviet Russia. The other is a volume of very charming fairy tales for children.

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Probably the two most dangerous men in India to-day are Jawarharlal Nehru and Vallabhai Patel (brother of the ex-Speaker, who came into prominence at the time of the Bardoli agitation). Both are unquestionably sincere in their beliefs, both are ruthless, and neither fears death. We in this country are apt to revile Gandhi, and to hold him responsible for many of the outrages that have occurred in India recently. But we have much for which to thank Gandhi and his doctrine of non-violence. I must confess that I tremble when I think of the hands into which the Indian Nationalist Movement may fall when the Mahatma is no longer able to exercise effective leadership. Certainly if Jawarharlal succeeds him we shall find Nehru's little finger to be thicker than Gandhi's loins.

The plain fact is that most of the Indian leaders hate us so intensely that they would die to be rid of us. That constitutes a situation the seriousness of which it would be impossible to exaggerate. We read daily of sporadic outbursts of terrorism by hysterical Bengali babus; they are nothing—the police can deal with all that very adequately. But there is only one thing that saves us to-day from a bloody uprising such as has not been seen since 1857, and that is the doctrine of *Ahimsa*. Indians are taught that they may and should die for the freedom of their country, but that they must not take the lives of others. Has that belief become an integral part of the Indian character, or does it hold sway to such extent as it does merely as the

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result of the personal influence of Mr. Gandhi? Will the doctrine of *Ahimsa* survive Mr. Gandhi? If not we may yet find ourselves faced with the task of fighting armed insurrection in India. Nehru and Patel, I believe, would not flinch at the prospect.

One can see indications of the general feeling in the public attitude towards the perpetrators of various outrages. I have before referred to the case of Bhagat Singh, who was convicted of throwing bombs in the Legislative Assembly and of complicity in the murder of Mr. Saunders at Lahore. All over India these acts were condemned; the Indian leaders are not murderers—they might feel called upon to fight for freedom, but they would never sink to the methods of hole-and-corner assassination. Yet the condemnation of Bhagat Singh's crimes seemed less than whole-hearted. A distinction was, in nearly every case, drawn between the crime and the criminal. He was young, he was misguided, he was led away by his love for his country; surely it was a case for a reprieve? Bhagat Singh, of course, was not reprieved; and on the day of his execution all India declared a *hartal* (day of mourning). Now he is a hero and a martyr. As for the condemnation of his crimes, that is forgotten. To-day he figures in the public mind as a noble upholder of India's freedom who was shamefully murdered by a tyrannical Government; and many a hot-headed young fool will be impelled to fresh outrages by the sainted memory of the martyr of Lahore.

In the Assembly, as a rule, there is no suggestion

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of the lurking terror of secret assassination, no reflection of the ugly temper that colours Indian life so deeply and so widely. Generally decorum reigns; even throughout the most hotly contested debates the spirit of *cooch parwah nahin* persists. Why indeed, should it not, when victory for one party or another decides, not the fate of the Bill, but merely the procedure by means of which its provisions will be carried out? Only when some of the hardy annuals among controversial subjects are being discussed—such as the measures for combating terrorism, or the various amendments to the Press Act—does one see anything approaching excitement.

Generally it is the Indians who run away with the oratorical honours. They have learnt our parliamentary procedure very thoroughly, and every Indian is a born debater. Many of the Indian members would be outstanding even in our own House of Commons; and after a fiery Swarajist attack the reply of the Home Member, or whoever speaks for the Government, sounds tame and unconvincing. The Indian Civil Servant is not as a rule a trained orator; he knows that his job does not hang on his ability to carry the House with him, and he has nothing to fear from a "snap division". Probably he finds his pseudo-parliamentary duties in the Assembly a bit of a bore; certainly he carries them out with a cold precision that makes a speech from the Government benches rather a dull affair. The Indians are not greatly interested in the

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proceedings that take place in their "Parliament", and empty benches are often to be seen in the public galleries. Occasionally, of course, there is something in the nature of a "scene"; I remember one such when an Indian journalist in the Press Gallery, in a sudden access of enthusiasm, threw an attaché case at Sir Basil Blackett, the Finance Member. Nobody—least of all the journalist in question—ever knew why he had done so; but I believe it was the making of him. From being a mere nobody he became—although the authorities took no action against him—a national figure. I even ran across him in London not long ago. Apparently he is now an important man. I recommend this method of acquiring fame to my friends in Fleet Street.

The late Mr. Patel, when he was Speaker of the Indian Assembly, used to rule the proceedings with a rod of iron. A little, bearded figure, he was by no means impressive in Gandhi cap and *dhoti*, but in the full panoply of the Speaker, with wig and gown and enthroned in the seat of authority, he was a force to be reckoned with. Patel had visited England in order to study the procedure of the Mother of Parliaments, and he had done this with such thoroughness as to make him an authority on Parliamentary procedure. Frequently he would exercise his sardonic sense of humour in tripping up the Home Member on some point of order—he and Sir James Crerar were always at daggers drawn—and I have never known Patel to be wrong in his facts or to make an error in tactics.

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On one occasion he manoeuvred Sir James Crerar into such a position that the latter was forced to tender to the Speaker a formal apology—to the vast delight of all the Indian representatives. Patel tended to be a shade too autocratic in his conduct of the proceedings; he even excluded from the Press Gallery journalists of whose professional activities he disapproved. On one occasion I was informed that he was considering the advisability of ordering my banishment from the Gallery, but—fortunately, perhaps, for both of us—he decided to relent. I am sorry that Mr. Patel no longer occupies the Speaker's Chair. He was a thorn in the side of the officials, and some of his rulings, though he defended them ably, were grotesquely unfair. But he provided the one incalculable element in what would have otherwise have been very tame proceedings, and we of the Press Gallery found him a godsend. Assembly reports tend to run along a dull plane of monotony, but with Patel presiding there was always the chance of a "sensation" to liven up one's columns the next day.

At Simla, where the Assembly meets during the hot weather, the surroundings seem to make the procedure even more humdrum. Away from the real home of the Assembly in New Delhi the members appear to be more subdued, and debates of any news interest are less frequent. I was present at Simla, however, when the Sarda Bill for the prohibition of child marriage was being discussed, and there was some excitement, as well as a good

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deal of lobbying, about this measure. Ram Lal was our Parliamentary correspondent, but I had come up to Simla for a few days, partly for a rest and a change from the heat of the plains, and partly to form my own impressions of the proceedings. Ram Lal and I met nearly all the members of the Assembly socially, and I noticed that the Indian politician is no more averse from a little well-timed publicity than are his European counterparts. Many of the speeches delivered amidst applause before the Assembly I had seen, and in some cases "vetted", on the previous evening.

Colonel (now Sir H.) Gidney was one of those who spoke in support of the Sarda Bill. The gallant Colonel, who had been for many years in the Indian Medical Service, dealt with the problem mainly from the point of view of the medical man, and laid stress on the sufferings of youthful mothers forced into child-bearing almost immediately after puberty. He spoke well and effectively and held the respectful attention of the Assembly until he reached his peroration, in which he referred to the unhappy lot of these girls suffering the pangs of parturition when they ought still to be playing with their dolls and toys. "At an age," he repeated impressively, "when they should still be playing with their dolls and toys." There was a pause, and then I saw appear on Gidney's face the horrid consciousness that something had gone wrong. Hurriedly he corrected himself. "I mean, of course," he said, "with their toys and dolls." This was too much for



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the gravity of the Assembly, which dissolved into laughter. The Sarda Bill was passed, but I fear the value of Colonel Gidney's support was sadly diminished by that unfortunate "Spoonerism". However, when I met him that evening his spirits had recovered, and he was as ready as anyone else to laugh at the joke.

Among the best speakers in the Assembly was Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the so-called "Independent" Party. Unlike the majority of Nationalists, Mr. Jinnah habitually wore European clothes, and had the reputation of being one of the best dressed men in India. Despite the eloquence of its leader, I never quite succeeded in making out what the Independent Party really stood for, or what policy it intended to put forward. Most of the Independents were "Moderates", to the extent that they asked only for assurances that *Swaraj* would be arrived at by progressive stages, and they did not, like the Congress and the other irreconcilables, demand Dominion Status by a set date. But they were sufficiently numerous to constitute a body the vote of which, with such delicately balanced parties, was a matter of considerable importance, and I think Mr. Jinnah enjoyed the knowledge that he was not infrequently in a position to decide the fate of a division.

Yet, with all their speeches, their lobbying and their manoeuvring, I fear that the ablest of the Indian politicians feel that in the Assembly they are doing little more than playing at politics. They

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are learning the rules of the game—a game they hope and intend to play in real earnest when autonomy has been achieved. But in the possibility of achieving autonomy through the medium of Parliamentary debates they have little confidence.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MR. GANDHI AND "PASSIVE RESISTANCE".

HE who would understand the spirit that animates the India of to-day must first make an attempt to grasp the mentality of Mr. Gandhi—and that is no easy task. The outsider is apt to underestimate the importance and the influence of this bald, bespectacled, ugly little man in blanket and loin-cloth, with his apparently theatrical gestures of self-sacrifice and asceticism, his days of silence, his "fasts unto death", and his "Himalayan blunders". Alternatively the European may be tempted to resent the power wielded by Gandhi, to share the view expressed by Mr. Churchill, who referred in one of his speeches to "the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of Viceroy's Palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor".

To adopt either of these attitudes is to fail hopelessly to understand the significance of Mr. Gandhi's message and his importance as India's representative. For there is no blinking the fact that Gandhi can speak in the name of India as no other man is or ever has been able to do. The simplicity and

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saintliness of his life, which have won him the title of "Mahatma" (great soul), have endeared him to the teeming millions of India's people who always venerate the ascetic. The rank and file of the Indians have assimilated the ideals he puts forward, even though they may fail to grasp the philosophy underlying them. It is an immensely significant fact that millions of human beings would quite simply and quite literally lay down their lives at Gandhi's behest.

Without holding any "official" position of any description, Gandhi wields greater power, probably, than any other individual living to-day. No Fascist or Communist dictator, and certainly no constitutional monarch, has anything like his influence. In 1921, on the strength of Gandhi's mere word, practically the whole of India embarked on the Non-Co-operation Movement. That is remarkable, but not unique; history is full of examples of popular movements that have been inspired and organised by one clever demagogue. But in the same year, shocked by the atrocities that had occurred at Chauri Chaura and elsewhere, Mr. Gandhi issued a ukase that the movement should cease—and it ceased. That seems to me something like a miracle. There have been many men—there are men to-day—who might start a social movement, even a revolution. I doubt if there has ever been a man, until Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi appeared, who with a word has quelled a nation in tumult.

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Mr. Gandhi is sixty-five years of age; he was born at Porbunder, where his father had filled the office of Prime Minister of the State of Kathiawar. Of the *Vaishya* caste (he is a Modh *Banya*), he came of a family intensely devoted to the Hindu faith; he was nurtured in his early days on the sacred writings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which profoundly influenced him. Early in life he came into contact with Christian missionaries, and he was strongly attracted to the Christian faith; there was even a time when his conversion to Christianity appeared a possibility, and there seems little doubt that his mind has been deeply impressed with the Christian ethic. C. F. Andrews, in his book, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, says: "Tolstoy's teaching had drawn him on to read the Sermon on the Mount, and this made his own inner ideal still clearer and brighter. He linked this sermon with the precepts which he had received as a Vaishnava from his mother in his childhood." He was also, one learns, much affected by the writings of Ruskin, which in combination with Tolstoy, the New Testament and the *Bhagavad Gita*, must have made a queer metaphysical mixture. And it is a queer mixture indeed with which, in the mind of Mr. Gandhi, we have to deal.

In his boyhood Gandhi showed no very clear indications of future greatness. He went through the usual trials and tribulations incidental to adolescence, he had his period of doubt and of spiritual difficulties, and for a time—like most

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intelligent young men—he was in danger of becoming an atheist. He married at the age of thirteen, studied law in England, and returned to India to practise as a barrister. The first turning point in his life came when he was sent on legal business to South Africa.

Probably the troubles that Gandhi experienced in South Africa had a good deal to do with making him an Indian Nationalist. In Africa the "colour line" is drawn with very much more definiteness than in India. Gandhi found himself treated as a "nigger", forbidden to travel first-class on the railways, and subjected to numerous humiliations. At the same time he found that the treatment accorded to Indians who had been sent to work in the mines of South Africa left much to be desired. The young barrister flung himself wholeheartedly into the movement for the amelioration of their circumstances. That he was sincere in his desire to help his fellow-countrymen is beyond doubt; that he suffered physically, mentally and financially for his altruistic efforts is equally sure. But it seems probable also that he enjoyed his sufferings. Gandhi has always been a masochist; he has lusted after martyrdom as some men lust after women and some after wine. It is perhaps the strongest motive—albeit an unconscious motive—that has actuated him in his public life.

Gandhi achieved much for the welfare of Indians in South Africa, and he returned to India already famous. In those days he was not hostile to the

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British administration; he was, he says, ready and willing to co-operate with the Government in the working of the Reforms. But as time went on he lost his belief in the good faith of the British; and his hostility found its first public expression in the Non-Co-operation Movement of 1921. Gandhi issued instructions that, while preserving intact the ideal of non-violence (*Ahimsa*), Indians should refuse to co-operate in any way in the work of the Administration; Government servants should resign their offices, teachers and pupils should leave the Government schools, Indian lawyers should cease to plead before the tribunals of the Raj, no taxes should be paid, and defaulting citizens should allow their goods to be seized in lieu of payment.

The distress that followed as a result of non-co-operation was, of course, appalling. Literally hundreds of thousands of non-co-operators were arrested; the jails were full, and the hundreds of temporary jails that were commandeered for the passive resisters proved quite inadequate to cope with the vast surplus of unhoused "prisoners". The police in their perplexity were reduced to driving lorry-loads of arrested men and women miles out of town and there releasing them; the problem of their accommodation would thus not have to be solved until they had walked back. How this situation—farcical if it had not been so serious—would have ended, had the ideal of non-violence been adhered to, none can say; it might have succeeded in paralysing the whole machinery of the administration

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of the country. But, as any practical man might have foreseen, the abstract philosophy of the Mahatma did not suffice to restrain mob fury at a time when feeling was so exceptionally aroused. There were riots, involving loss of life, in Bombay and elsewhere, and finally the particularly brutal murder of a number of police officers at Chauri Chaura convinced Mr. Gandhi of his "Himalayan blunder" in supposing that the masses, if left to themselves, would not resort to violence. Gandhi called off the Non-Co-operation Movement, for which, he said, India was not yet ripe, and undertook a fast of expiation. Not long afterwards he was arrested, charged with sedition, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. He was released, after serving only a short term, on the grounds of ill-health.

One would have supposed that this inglorious episode, resulting in untold suffering and bringing gain to nobody, would seriously have damaged the Mahatma's prestige. Far from it. Gandhi came out of prison much more of a national hero than he had entered it. He has not since staged any nationwide movement, with the possible exception of the rather ridiculous crusade against the Salt Tax, but has confined himself more or less to furthering the programme of social reform which he holds to be an indispensable preliminary to the establishment of *Swaraj*. The six main features of Gandhi's programme, which must be considered in some detail, are the following:—



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1. The removal of "untouchability".
2. Hindu-Muslim unity.
3. The adoption of the spinning wheel (*Charka*) and *Swadeshi*.
4. Non-violence (*Ahimsa*).
5. The prohibition of alcohol and drugs.
6. Equality between men and women.

Mr. Gandhi is an upholder of the caste system, which he considers to be an integral and essential part of Hinduism.\* At the same time he rejects the suggestion that membership of any caste implies superiority over the members of any other caste. In the statement of rules of his Savarmati Ashram (Ashram of Soul-Force) he says: "We have to recognise the dignity of labour. If a barber or shoemaker attends a college he ought not to abandon his profession. I consider that such professions are just as good as the profession of medicine." What Mr. Gandhi means by saying that one profession is "just as good" as another is perhaps not very clear; but it may be relevant to observe that the Mahatma has always had a prejudice against the medical profession.†

But caste, in the Mahatma's view, by no means

\*In this he is opposed to the poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who seeks for the total abolition of caste.

†"Hospitals," says Mr. Gandhi, "are the instruments that the Devil has been using for his own purpose, in order to keep his hold on his kingdom. They perpetuate vice, misery, degradation, and real slavery. . . . If there were no hospitals for venereal diseases, or even for consumptives, we should have less consumption and less sexual vice amongst us."

Despite these views, however, Mr. Gandhi availed himself while he was in jail of the services of an English surgeon for an operation for appendicitis.

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necessarily implies the theory of untouchability, which he declares to be a disgrace to Hinduism and without any warrant in the sacred writings. Gandhi has, in this matter at least, put his teaching into practice. He has himself frequently dined with untouchables, and he created a tremendous sensation by admitting an untouchable family to his Ashram. The removal of untouchability is a plank in Mr. Gandhi's platform in regard to which he has the full support of European opinion; unfortunately it is an ideal that seems to appeal less strongly to the Hindus, who appear less disposed to follow the Mahatma in this than in what we must consider to be less exalted aims.

In regard to Hindu-Muslim unity, Mr. Gandhi agrees with the view of Mr. Jinnah that this is the one real and essential preliminary to the establishment of *Swaraj*. Although a Hindu of the Hindus, Mr. Gandhi has many Mohammedan friends and supporters; he is convinced that all the differences between the two communities can be adjusted by love. He particularly advocates that the Hindus should love the Mussulmans, to which the Mussulmans, I gather, have no especial objection. In 1919 Mr. Gandhi made a gesture designed, apparently, to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. During the war Mr. Lloyd George gave to Indian Mussulmans a pledge that the Khilafat should remain inviolate; and when, at the conclusion of peace, the Allies proceeded to the partition of Turkey, the Mohammedans of India claimed that this pledge had been

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broken. Mr. Gandhi—whether for reasons of policy or whether inspired by more idealistic motives—threw himself heart and soul into the Khilafat Movement, and urged upon the Hindus that it was their bounden duty to assist their Muslim brothers in securing the fulfilment of the pledge. The movement does not seem to have aroused a great deal of enthusiasm among Hindus, but it won for Mr. Gandhi influential Moham-medan support, notably that of the Ali Brothers (Shaukat Ali and the late Mohammed Ali).

Despite the efforts of the Mahatma, Hindu-Muslim unity does not seem any nearer to-day than it did before the Khilafat Movement; the two communities are still at daggers drawn, and troops must still be held in readiness when the dates of their religious festivals happen to coincide. But this is a matter with which I must deal more fully in a later chapter.

Mr. Gandhi's advocacy of the *Charka* (spinning wheel) is to some extent explained by the fact, previously mentioned, that the miserably inadequate tracts of land available to the ryot in India, in combination with the unfavourable climatic conditions, render it impossible for the Indian peasant to work effectively more than a comparatively small number of days in the year. His income is insufficient for his needs, and during the long periods when agricultural work is not practicable he has no means of adding to it. For this reason Mr. Gandhi advocates the spinning of cloth

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(*Khaddar*) as a spare-time industry for the whole population. It requires no expensive apparatus and no great degree of skill; it can be practised by unemployed men, women and even children, adding to their scanty incomes and keeping in India money that would otherwise have to be sent abroad for the importation of cloth.

To this extent the idea seems reasonable enough. It is doubtful whether, in the spinning of cloth or any other considerable industry, the amateur can compete economically with the professional and whether the individual worker, even though he avoids "overhead expenses", can produce as cheaply as the well-equipped and adequately financed factory. But in a country so poor as India it may actually pay to adopt the generally more expensive method for the sake of the immediate benefits it brings. As a practical measure pure and simple, designed to alleviate to some extent the poverty of the ryot, there may be a good deal to be said for Mr. Gandhi's *Charka* movement. But the Mahatma does not leave the matter there. He is a confirmed mystic, and even with so humdrum and everyday an affair as the spinning-wheel he must visualise some queer, exotic and spiritual advantages that will accrue. Everybody, according to Mr. Gandhi, should use the *Charka*; everybody will derive moral as well as financial benefits therefrom. The Mahatma himself is never without his spinning-wheel, and he devotes a certain proportion of every day to spinning cloth. It is a little difficult to understand

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the spiritual uplift that Mr. Gandhi forecasts from the use of the *Charka*; one guesses that it corresponds roughly to the employment of the *Mantras* in the practice of Yoga—that it helps in the inducing of a state of abstract contemplation, as does any more or less mechanical activity. Be that as it may, however, the making of home-spun cloth by every Indian is definitely a part of Mr. Gandhi's programme of social reform.

It is linked to some extent with the doctrine of *Swadeshi*, which is an effort to make India economically self-supporting—backed, as are all Mr. Gandhi's proposals, by a strange and not very easily comprehensible philosophic system. It is not merely that India should produce her own cloth, that she should refrain as far as possible from the importation of foreign goods. She should be not only materially but also spiritually self-sufficient; the pure stream of Indian thought should not be contaminated with tributaries from the materialistic West. To quote the Mahatma's own definition of *Swadeshi*, "We should avoid being intimate with those whose social customs are different from ours. We should not mingle in the lives of men or peoples whose ideals are different from ours." Mr. Gandhi hates the materialistic civilisation of the West;\* he wants to set the clock back a thousand years, and he has not grasped the truth that to-day no

\*Every time I get into a railway car, or use a motor-bus, I know that I am doing violence to my sense of what is right." (*Mahatma Gandhi; His Own Story.*)

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country and no community can live in "splendid isolation". *Swadeshi* may have been a practical ideal in the past; now it is the dream of a visionary.

The teaching of *Ahimsa* is an integral part of Hinduism, but the vogue it has achieved in recent years is very largely due to the influence of Mr. Gandhi. *Ahimsa* has always been a religious teaching; it has been left to Mr. Gandhi to give it expression in political life and work. It was Gandhi who first made use, as a political weapon, of what Milton calls "the irresistible might of meekness", and all the *Satyagrahis*, all the passive resisters and the hunger-strikers, are the logical followers of the doctrine of *Ahimsa*.

There is no denying the plain fact that passive resistance is the strongest weapon known to man. It is, furthermore, a weapon that is particularly effective against the British. The Englishman as a rule is easy-going enough until he is provoked beyond endurance, and then he becomes ruthless, and the more active resistance he has to encounter the more ruthless he becomes. The terrorism of the Bengali bomb-thrower, apart from the moral objections to secret assassination, is, from the point of view of the Indian Nationalist, the very worst possible tactics that could be adopted. Terrorism is and will be countered with repression; the Englishman, once he is aroused, will meet frightfulness with frightfulness, and at that game he can more than hold his own with the Indian. But the case with the *Satyagrahis* is altogether different. When,

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in order to protest against some real or fancied grievance, hundreds of Indians in Lahore laid themselves full length across the roads, they paralysed the traffic of the city. Those same Englishmen who would without hesitation have shot down an armed and actively hostile mob were unable to drive in cold blood over the unresisting bodies of the *Satyagrahis*. There is no fun—and no practical benefit—in hitting a man who persistently turns the other cheek.

Essentially the same tactics were pursued by many of the men arrested in connection with the Lahore Conspiracy case who went on hunger-strike. They declined to take food while they were in jail awaiting trial, and by the time the case for the prosecution was ready for presentation they were unfit to plead. Then the authorities released them, and there started the miserable “cat and mouse” business (familiar in England during the days of the Suffragist agitation) of release and re-arrest. Each time there was a new hunger-strike; and at length one of the prisoners died—and was of course hailed as a martyr to the Satanic Government’s tyranny. Finally a measure had to be certified empowering the Courts, in certain cases, to try prisoners in their absence. This was a measure that certainly did seem to present an appearance of tyranny—an appearance of which, it need hardly be said, the Nationalists did not fail to take full advantage. Yet it is difficult to see what else the Government could have done. *Ahimsa* had forced them into a dilemma.

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We are beginning to see and to understand that when a people want a thing so badly that in order to get it they are prepared to die unresisting and uncomplaining, there is nothing to do but to give them that thing or else to massacre the entire community.

In 1921 Mr. Gandhi discovered that India was not yet ripe for civil disobedience. Perhaps fortunately for us, India is still not ripe for it. The peoples of the East, to some extent devitalised by the heat and the conditions in which they live, and with a philosophy of life deeply coloured by the ideas of reincarnation, *Karma* and *Kismet*, are more amenable to such a philosophy than those of the practical and extrovert West. Nevertheless, the teachings of Mr. Gandhi, demanding a rigid asceticism, the abandonment of all carnal pleasures, and a docile submission to any ills that may be inflicted, are by no means easy to follow in practice. The martial races of India are more inclined to armed resistance against what they deem to be tyranny; the more pacific of the Hindus lack the courage to endure just as they lack the courage to fight. Courage without pugnacity, resistance without aggression, to oppose tyranny while loving the tyrant, these are the teachings of *Ahimsa*. They are also, of course, the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, so that no originality can be claimed for them. We can, however, give Mr. Gandhi full marks for originality inasmuch as he is the first political leader who has ever had the idea of putting them into practice.



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If the whole of India ever becomes permeated with the doctrine of *Ahimsa*, and if India then still desires *Swaraj*, no power on earth can prevent her from attaining it. But this will mean that the essential spirit, not only of a people but of a heterogeneous collection of peoples, must be altered. To alter the Constitution of an Empire would seem to be a small task in comparison.

That Mr. Gandhi himself is a true exponent of *Ahimsa* none can deny. He really does love his enemies; he really is ready to suffer and to die for his faith and his people. His asceticism, his fasts, his spiritual self-scourgings, even his humility, all these are genuine—exasperatingly genuine, in fact. He is so difficult to deal with because he is so deeply, so uniquely sincere and self-effacing. He seeks nothing for himself, neither office nor wealth. The coffers of all the richest Indians are open to him, and for himself he takes nothing. He lives on a handful of *gram*, goat's milk and a little fruit; he seeks no material comforts, no rewards; his life is as simple and as devoid of luxury as that of any early Christian saint. He is revered all over India, but he has confessed that when he hears the cry of "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*"\* he is filled with a sense of his own unworthiness. We may—nay, we must—condemn Gandhi as an unpractical visionary and an idealist, but we cannot deny his honesty, his sincerity, his devotion to his country, and his meekness, even though we may detect in the last

\*"Long live Mahatma Gandhi!"

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quality a considerable admixture of spiritual pride.

For the deep contradiction in Mr. Gandhi's nature is his combination of deep humility with almost startling arrogance. Mr. Churchill finds it amazing that this "half-naked fakir" should parley on equal terms with the Viceroy. Mr. Gandhi, I honestly believe, would regard it almost as a condescension on his part. After all, the Viceroy is merely the representative of a temporal monarch; Mr. Gandhi believes himself to be divinely inspired, to be the Messiah of India Resurgent. Weak and fallible though he may be, he seeks at moments of crisis for divine aid, and he believes that it is vouchsafed to him. When he fails, it is because his own unworthiness has betrayed the Cause—because he has allowed some concession to the lusts of the flesh, or momentarily weakened in his love for his adversaries. When India fails to execute his commands—as for example, in 1921, when the doctrine of *Ahimsa* was drowned in the blood that flowed in Chauri Chaura and Bombay—Gandhi takes on his frail shoulders the sins of the community, Gandhi expiates, in fasting and in affliction, the shortcomings of his three hundred million compatriots. There is something almost breath-taking in such arrogance as this, combined as it is with a character so strongly marked by meekness. But pride is an essential part of the make-up of the martyr; one must be very sure of oneself before one can hold an opinion strongly enough to die for it. One wonders

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whether Mr. Gandhi has ever considered the personal application of his own aphorism, "Man is a fallible being. . . . What he may regard as answer to prayer may be an echo of his pride."

Against Mr. Gandhi's demand for the prohibition of alcohol and drugs in India it is difficult to find any very cogent argument. In regard to the latter, something has indeed been done, but in a rather half-hearted manner. Legislation in regard to drugs varies in different parts of India; in some places drug-taking is virtually unhampered, in others it is an offence to "assemble" to smoke opium but no offence to smoke it in private. The deleterious effects of drug-taking are well recognised; it must be admitted that the only reason why it is allowed to continue in India is that its prohibition would entail loss of revenue to the Government. The same objection, of course, also applies to the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic liquors, though in this respect the case for prohibition seems to be less strong. Alcohol is not so harmful in its effects as opium and it is questionable whether any Government is entitled to forbid its use without a clear mandate from the people. In India it is doubtful whether there is any such general desire for the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic liquors, and in any case the absence of any effective democratic machinery would make the ascertaining of such a desire, if it existed, a matter of extreme difficulty. Another practical objection to prohibition lies in the fact that a crude form of alcohol ("toddy") is very

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easily obtained from palm-trees, and there can be little doubt that legislation on the lines of the Volstead Act would lead to the establishment of vast numbers of illicit stills and to "boot-legging" on a large scale.

The last item on Mr. Gandhi's programme—the demand for equality between men and women—I take to be rather an aspiration for the distant future than an immediate practical aim. Mr. Gandhi is too shrewd a man not to know that "equality" in any real sense between men and women is a physical impossibility. But he does ask—and rightly—that many of the disqualifications that attach specifically to Indian women should be removed. He demands for them equal educational opportunities with those accorded to men, he seeks for the abolition of *purdah* and the *zenana*, and he is a strong supporter of the movement in favour of widow-remarriage. On one occasion he went so far as to entreat an audience of young men whom he was addressing to choose widows rather than spinsters for their wives.

We have examined Mr. Gandhi's political and social programme, all too briefly, but still in some detail. The reader cannot fail to have been struck with the many inconsistencies which the Mahatma's character reveals—his humility and his arrogance, his unpractical idealism and his shrewd common-sense, his irreconcilable obstinacy and his skill at negotiation. This is indeed the keynote of his character; he is consistent only in his inconsistency. Many of his *obiter dicta* are those of an unworldly

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recluse; many are those of a wise and far-seeing statesman; some could have been uttered, one would think, only by a charlatan or a fool. Yet Mr. Gandhi is far from being a fool, and he is no charlatan, unless to the extent that every man who is self-deceived (and who is not?) becomes a charlatan. He is above all a patriot and a saint; if, like many saints, he is deficient in the power of logic, who shall blame him? And with his saintliness he combines a shrewdness and a skill in negotiation that make him a truly remarkable figure.

It is when he veils himself in the clouds of metaphysics that Mr. Gandhi is least convincing. His ideal of asceticism—a philosophy that has never appealed with any force to the West—becomes so involved, so wrapped up in the complications of mysticism, as to be almost unintelligible. Hindu religious thinkers divide the life of a man into three periods: in the first he must study the sacred books, in the second he must marry and found a family, and in the third he must retire from the material things of the world for an existence of abstract thought. Mr. Gandhi wants to abolish the second stage altogether. He has no objection to the institution of marriage, but he holds that even in married life a man should remain celibate.\* One wonders in that case how the next generation is to be procreated; but the Mahatma has an answer ready for that objection. "Then you fear there will be an end of creation?" he asks. "No. The extreme

\*Mr. Gandhi has three sons.

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logical result would be not extinction of the human species, but the transference of it to a higher plane." To me, I must admit, this pronouncement is as meaningless as any mere jumble of words; Mr. Gandhi may prefer to call death a "transference to a higher plane", but it will none the less be registered as a decrease in the population on the Census returns. However, we need not worry very seriously over the Mahatma's plans for the attainment of Utopia by means of race suicide. Indians may in course of time render lip-service to the doctrines of *Ahimsa*, of *Swadeshi*, of anything you please; but that they will ever abjure the joys of the conjugal bed is incredible to anybody who has even a nodding acquaintance with social conditions in the country.

One must admire Gandhi, but one feels that one would prefer to do one's admiring at a distance. A saint is, for most of us poor sinners, difficult company to live with—it is not easy to conduct the whole of one's life on so exalted a plane as one's *Guru* may require. The person I have always felt most sorry for is Mrs. Gandhi. She, poor woman, has not invariably been strong in faith, high-souled and all-enduring. Once she succumbed to the temptation of riches, and was found in possession of a few coppers which some visitor to the Ashram had given her. Her husband discovered the lapse, and goodness knows what pains and penances had to be endured. Those who know anything of Mr. Gandhi will not be surprised to learn that he at once undertook

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a fast of expiation (poor Mrs. Gandhi was not even allowed the sorry privilege of atoning for her own shortcomings); and not content with that, the Mahatma, after having duly "forgiven" his erring spouse, found it necessary to describe the whole affair at length in the pages of his journal, *Young India*, for the edification of the entire country. Mrs. Gandhi, one feels, has had something to put up with—as have the wives of most saints. "I can remember," says the Mahatma, "having broken to bits, when a young man, the loved bangles of my own dear wife, because they were a matter of difference between us. . . . I did it, not out of hate, but out of love." Well, well. I suppose I am unregenerate, but had I been Mrs. Gandhi I should have found it easier to forgive the loss of my bangles if they had been destroyed in a moment of irritation, rather than in that cold, calculated and maddeningly impersonal "love" characteristic of the saint.

Gandhi is certainly a good man, almost certainly a great man, and he is loved by his countrymen as few men have been in the history of the world. The measure of his achievement for India cannot be accurately computed for many years yet; but he is even now a factor of outstanding importance in the Indian problem. He is a portent—a portent of what, certainly not I and probably not Mr. Gandhi can tell.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE NATIONALISTS AND THE RAJ

It is impossible to deny the fact—a fact that must be obvious to the tourist to India to-day—that there is in the country a very marked and a very widespread hostility to the British and to the present administration. It is a hostility that is apparent not only in the speeches and in the writings of Indian politicians and the leaders of Indian thought, but also in the attitude of the rank and file of the people towards the European. Time was when the white man in India could do no wrong, when he was a super-man, almost a demi-god. The Indian would stand by respectfully to give him passage, would submit himself unquestioningly to the will of the conquering white. Those days are over—happily, since not even the most rabid Imperialist desires to rule over a race of slaves. It is a pity, however, that the pendulum seems to have swung rather too far in the opposite direction, that the European who was once given the whole of the pavement is now lucky if he is not pushed off it. The Englishman in India finds but little obsequiousness these days, except among a few old retainers who in their youth have served under British officers in the Frontier campaigns. From the majority he will



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receive black looks and grudging obedience, he will hear muttered curses as he passes—and he will be wise to ignore them. For he has lost to-day almost as much in prestige as he has in popularity.

The loss of prestige which the English have suffered in India is due very largely to the fact that in the last few generations the East has discovered with a shock of surprise that the West in general, and England in particular, is no longer invincible. When Clive was winning his amazing victories in India, defeating enormous armies of Indians with relatively tiny bodies of English troops and building up a reputation of unchallengeable military supremacy, even then, with our prestige at its highest, the smallest reverse was sufficient to destroy the legend of unconquerability. To impress our superiority firmly on the minds of the Indians and to maintain that impression it was necessary to be invariably victorious, to ensure that even the shadow of defeat should never fall on our arms. By an almost unparalleled combination of luck, skill and bravery we actually succeeded for many years in maintaining a nearly unbroken succession of victories; even the Mahrattas, the most formidable Indian coalition since the palmy days of the Moghuls, were unable to stand against a relatively small British expedition. So great was our prestige that we had morally won an engagement before a shot was fired.

To-day the legend of our supremacy no longer holds credence. Not all of our Afghan expeditions have been wholly successful; there has been

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mismanagement, due, perhaps, to over-confidence; and the Indians have learned that it is possible for native troops without the advantage of heavy artillery to withstand and even to repel the advance of British forces. Nor have British arms been invariably successful in the Sudan; and the inglorious history of the Boer War dealt our prestige a heavy blow. The decisive defeat of Greece—a Western Power—by Turkey was sufficient to restore to the Mohammedans some measure of their confidence in that military prowess that once enabled Islam to overrun Europe; and the result of the Russo-Japanese War, which Orientals believed to be a trial of strength between East and West, caused a heavy slump in European prestige. All these factors combined to destroy Indian belief in Britain's supremacy; and when the European War came along and the British Cabinet asked for India's military assistance, this helped to convince the Indians that they were, in the field of arms, Britain's equal if not her superior. This is not the occasion for an attempt to estimate the value of India's assistance in the war, but there can be no doubt that Indian politicians—whether out of ignorance or as a point of policy—greatly exaggerate that value. I have been seriously told by Indian Nationalists that it was India's contribution in man-power that won the war for the Allies!

The position after the war, therefore, was this: Indians had lost their belief in the military supremacy of the British and had acquired a new confidence

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in their own powers. They considered that Britain owed India a debt of gratitude for the military assistance she had received during the war, and that that fact made it all the more incumbent on us to fulfil the promise of progressive steps towards autonomy which we had given in the past. We had just emerged victoriously from a war fought in the name of freedom; how, therefore, could we refuse freedom to those who had helped us to win that war? Lord Curzon foresaw these developments when he warned the War Cabinet in 1917 that "we are expected to translate into practice in our own domestic household the sentiments we have so enthusiastically preached".

It is easy to see that the situation that thus arose was delicate in the extreme. It was, of course, not possible for the British to sit back and hand over the administration of India to a handful of Bengali lawyers and babus who claimed to represent "the country". At the same time it was desirable to conciliate Indian opinion and to convince the agitators that progressive steps towards Indian self-government were being taken. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were designed with this purpose—to train Indians in the duties and the routine of government, to preserve intact the final responsibility of the Viceroy at the centre, and at the same time to increase gradually the powers allotted to Indian ministers as well as the number of departments transferred to their control.

Probably nothing else, in the circumstances,

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could have been done. At the same time, it must have been clear that the system, if it worked at all, could work only with extreme difficulty and with a great deal of friction. Between a people eager for power and a ruling caste jealous of its prerogatives, between greedy recipients and grudging givers, friendship is liable to become a little strained.

Indians complain that the pace of India's progress towards autonomy is too slow, that British legislation is repressive, that it is designed primarily for the benefit of Britain and not for that of India, that in Government and administrative appointments preference is given unfairly to English as against Indian candidates. Nor are these accusations lacking in some measure of truth. But the desire of the authorities to appoint Englishmen to offices of high rank is not due solely to racial prejudice or to a kind of nepotism. To the Indian the thought of bribery is less repugnant than to the Englishman; he tends to be more open to corruption than is the British official; and—regrettable though it may be—Indians have less confidence in the integrity of their own people than in that of the British. Another difficulty in the way of appointing Indians to high office lies in the deep-rooted hostility between Hindus and Mohammedans. The appointment of a member of one of these two communities is always resented by the members of the other; and in the case of certain appointments, particularly in the police and in the judiciary, the

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position of the Indian incumbent, however high-minded and impartial he may be, becomes extremely difficult. The lot of the Hindu or Mohammedan magistrate who has to enquire into the causes of a Hindu-Muslim riot, to consider the invariably conflicting testimony of witnesses of his own faith and those of a community antipathetic to him, is by no means enviable. Even if he is able to overcome his own prejudices and to judge as fairly as is humanly possible, he will not be credited with worthy motives. If he decides in favour of his own community he is charged with dishonesty; if he gives the verdict to the other side, then clearly he is a traitor trying to curry favour with the Raj and with the enemies of his own people. The Englishman as a rule is free from the imputation of bias; as between a European and an Indian his good faith may possibly be impugned, but in deciding between two Indians his impartiality will not be challenged.

It is difficult to deny or to palliate the fact that in the Indian judiciary system a certain measure of preference is given to Europeans. Although this is a fact known to all who have lived in India, it is very difficult to substantiate. For the difference is found not so much in the Statute Book as in practice and in unwritten law. The European litigant often receives preferential treatment in the courts, and the police are less anxious to proceed criminally against Europeans. In my own experience I have come across an aggravated case of manslaughter by a European, for which I am certain any Indian

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would have served ten years. The whole matter was smoothed over as an "accident", and the man in question got clear away with it. There was a good deal of dissatisfaction in consequence of this case, and protests were made in the Indian Press. Incidents of this kind are sufficiently common to be disquieting. Presumably it is thought that the conviction of Europeans on criminal charges is liable to be damaging to the prestige of the Raj. It seems clear, however, that our prestige suffers far more seriously when we allow doubts to creep in regarding the impartiality of our tribunals.

One of the chief difficulties in the way of the granting of self-government to India lies in the need for providing for the military defence of the country. This is a point which Indian politicians have not failed to consider, although in most cases they have to some extent shirked the issue. Pandit Motilal Nehru, in the famous "All-Parties' Report" issued under his name, drew attention to the fact that other colonies and dependencies have not been asked to provide wholly for their own military defence before being granted autonomy, and that in any case an effective Indian army is already in existence. But to argue thus is to overlook the many special difficulties with which India has to contend. The necessity for a country to have a well-equipped and efficient standing army is directly proportionate to the danger in which that country stands from foreign invasion. The possibility of an armed attack on Australia, or even on Canada, with its

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vast frontier unguarded by a single gun, is so extremely remote as to be hardly worth considering. Can we say the same of India?

The history of India has been one long record of successful invasions from the North. The Aryan occupation and the Moghul invasion under Baber are the two that have exercised the most profound influence on the country; but even though the most important they are but two among many. Persians, Afghans, the fierce tribes from the no-man's land of the North, all have at times overrun the fertile plains of the Punjab; none have met with any effective resistance from the inhabitants. And these raids are not merely a relic of the bad old past. The warlike tribes the other side of the Khyber are, as all who have served in the North-West Frontier Province are aware, still a danger; and the desire that Russia has always had to extend to the South makes the possibility of invasion by a European Power not inconceivably remote. The problem of the defence of India is thus not in any way analogous with that of Australia or any of the self-governing Dominions.

Not only this, but it must be remembered that the function of the army in India is twofold. It is responsible for internal order as well as for external security. For reasons with which I have already dealt, it is neither feasible nor desirable that the police in India should be solely charged with the control of civil disturbances. A Hindu-Muslim riot is always more easily quelled or prevented by a

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display of troops under British leadership than by any corresponding body of police, the personnel of which is predominantly Indian, and which is therefore less free from the suspicion of bias. The police as a rule do not inspire sufficient respect or confidence to be able to tackle such situations effectively, and the calling in of the military is more the rule than the exception. The Report of the Indian Statutory Commission rightly points out that "one condition . . . of a self-governing India must be its ability to maintain without the aid of British troops the essential of all good government, *viz*; public peace and tranquillity". That ability, at any rate at present, India lacks.

Pandit Motilal's statement that an effective Indian army already exists has only to be examined to provide its own refutation. Indians make a grievance of the fact that the Indian army is to so great an extent officered by British soldiers, and claim that suitable Indian officers are given no opportunity of taking command. Whatever justification there may be for many of the Indian complaints against the British administration, here at least there is none. The majority of Indians lack the specific talents required for army life and have no desire for a military career. To meet Indian complaints of the lack of opportunity afforded to prospective military candidates, vacancies for intending Indian officers have been created at Sandhurst and at Woolwich, and provision has been made for meeting the expenses of candidates



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who come to England for this purpose. From the time that these arrangements were made up to the present day the applicants for military training have never been in excess of the vacancies available. Indians have had full and sufficient opportunity of attaining to commissioned rank in the Indian army; the plain fact is that the overwhelming majority of them lack the desire and the ability to become successful army officers.

The martial races of India—Sikhs, Pathans, Rajputs, Mahrattas—make excellent fighting material; as soldiers and even as non-commissioned officers the world produces none better. But they are not the stuff of which efficient officers are made. They will obey orders unhesitatingly, and will display magnificent courage in doing so. But they lack both initiative and the education required by one who would give orders. Under British leadership they form a splendid body of fighting men; without that leadership they would be an undisciplined mob. Who, then, in the absence of the British is to supply leadership? The Madrassi Brahman is certainly capable of acquiring the whole of the theory of the art of war—he is strong on theory. But the suggestion that he could enforce discipline, that he would ever be obeyed by an army of natural fighters who instinctively dislike and despise him, is too outrageous to warrant consideration. An army of Sikhs, Pathans, Rajputs and United Provinces Mussulmans led and officered by a staff of babus and pleaders would be the most

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grotesque of conceptions. Nevertheless, it is the only purely Indian army that one can visualise at present. Before an Indian army can come into being education must cease to be the prerogative of the Brahmans and the martial races must be trained to take over the responsibilities of military leadership. That is a work, not of years but of generations; and even then it would not completely solve the problem. At present the babus and the vakils are safe behind British bayonets. If the Sikh and the Pathan, without British control, were wielding those bayonets, the talkers of Bengal and Madras would be wiped out almost to a man. Indians need British troops for their protection against Indians. Says Professor Keith, "self-government without an effective Indian army is an impossibility, and no amount of protests or demonstrations or denunciations of the Imperial Government can avail to alter that fact".

I am convinced that, despite many errors and some occasional malpractices, our administration in India has been on the whole worthy, honourable, and beneficial to the vast majority of the people; I think that our work in guiding the destinies of the Indian peoples constitutes not one of the least admirable chapters in our history. But the task to-day, due to the recalcitrance of the Indians and to the varying and incompatible promises we ourselves have made, has become virtually an impossible one. Every concession we make is interpreted gleefully as a sign of weakness on our

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part; every display of the "iron hand" is met with howls of tyranny and accusations that we have again broken our pledges. No blame for this attaches to any individual. Viceroy after Viceroy arrives in India and finds himself committed to a hopeless task. He is to rule autocratically under the guise of democracy; he is to put down terrorism and conciliate the terrorists; he is to maintain a vanished prestige, to foster non-existent democratic institutions, to satisfy the demands of India which India cannot even formulate. In every case, of course, he fails to achieve the impossible, and in almost every case he falls between two stools. He cannot go as far as the extreme Nationalists desire; he cannot put back the clock as the die-hard Conservatives at home wish him to do. As a result he satisfies neither party; by the one party he is called a tyrant and by the other a weakling truckling to sedition. Lord Irwin, who is Mr. Gandhi's Western counterpart to the extent that he is a combination of saint and statesman, was particularly unfortunate in this respect. He did probably more for India than any other Viceroy since Curzon, and he found his reward in violence and in contumely, in insults from the "die-hards" and in a bomb from the "reds".

Indians are insatiable readers of our newspapers and our parliamentary reports. Unfortunately, however, they have not the sense of proportion that would enable them to estimate at their true valuation the speeches that they read. To the

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Indian the voice of every private Member of Parliament is the voice of the Government; a letter in *The Times* must be the expression of the heart of the great British people. For this reason the views of the Churchills and the O'Dwyers acquire in India a spurious importance that few people would ever dream of attributing to them over here; and they have in many cases definitely hindered the conciliatory work of the Viceroy and the Indian Government. It has been found necessary to pass a Press Act in India; one is tempted to regret that it is not feasible to extend its provisions to prevent the importation into the country of English newspapers containing matter which, however little interest it may arouse over here, is there of a definitely inflammatory nature.

Mr. Churchill's consistent and strongly expressed opposition to the "White Paper" proposals has done much to alarm Indian opinion, and even to make some of the Indian leaders distrustful of the extent to which Britain will carry out her promises to India. The British public, on the whole, is not disposed to attach so much importance to Mr. Churchill's views. Over here we know that there is no very considerable party owing him allegiance, and that, despite the newspaper publicity which the opponents of the "White Paper" have achieved, they do not command a great deal of support in the House of Commons. But the Indian, who sees Mr. Churchill's pronouncements occupying pride of place in the English newspapers, often fails to realise this.

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Mr. Churchill's slighting description of Mr. Gandhi, which I have already quoted, created a storm of indignation in India, and others of his utterances have aroused as much apprehension as anger. What is to be said, for example, of a statesman who in December, 1930, at a time when negotiations with Indian representatives were at their most difficult and delicate stage, must deliver himself in public of the statement that "underneath the smooth platitudes and euphemisms of Western democratic politics and all this airy Round Table talk, the actual process of governing India has been tardily but rigorously carried on. Twenty-four thousand Indian politicians or their dupes are in jail"? How is this pronouncement likely to be interpreted in India? What, indeed, is the plain meaning of the words? Surely that British promises at the Round Table Conferences mean nothing, and that the British Raj in India will be maintained by the somewhat draconian method of imprisoning twenty-four thousand of the people. Indian politicians hear, as they think, the voice of England speaking through the lips of Mr. Churchill, and they politely ask whether, if we cannot enforce our rule except by such wholesale imprisonments, it is not about time we got out and made room for somebody who can.

I am myself an Indian Nationalist to the extent that I believe that the British promises of the granting to India of self-government by progressive stages ought to be and must be fulfilled. But I do

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not believe that anything like self-government or Dominion Status can come within this generation, or indeed within any time that can now be specified. The government of India by Indians is a possibility depending on several factors, not the least of which is the production by Indians of proof of their ability to govern. The rock on which Anglo-Indian friendship—what remains of it—may quite conceivably split is this: must Indians provide that proof before powers are granted to them, or should they hold the reins of office for an experimental period? Both courses are open to very serious objections. Whether there is a *via media* by which the difficulties may be overcome is a matter we shall have to consider in another chapter.

One thing, at any rate, is certain. To the slogan, "Govern or get out", we have no adequate reply. We are not governing and we are not getting out. We are holding on to the reins of authority in India, not as the skilled navigator grasps the steering-wheel, but rather as a drowning man clutches at a straw. For this, as I have tried to explain, no individual is to be blamed. We are committed to our policy in India, a policy that seems to imply long periods of almost ridiculous leniency varied by shorter intervals of what might seem unnecessary severity. The law is falling into disrepute in India. Little boys who have picketed the foreign cloth-shops and insulted the might of the Empire by lisping "*Bande Mataram*" are sentenced to almost savage terms of imprisonment—

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frequently to "rigorous imprisonment", and in India the word "rigorous" is to be interpreted literally. Irreconcilable seditionists are accorded "special treatment" which entails no greater hardship than the loss of the right to travel freely. The regulations for the treatment of political prisoners that were made public a few years ago provided all India with food for amusement. Prisoners may see their friends whenever they wish, have access to books and periodicals, must be accorded facilities for carrying on whatever trades or vocations they practised in civil life, and be fed and housed in a style similar to that to which they are accustomed. The political prisoner in India may often actually derive financial benefit from his incarceration, besides sometimes living a life of luxury to which he has formerly been a stranger. And when he comes out of jail he is a hero who has suffered martyrdom for the Motherland. The imprisonment of "twenty-four thousand Indian politicians or their dupes" to which Mr. Churchill refers has been totally ineffective, has even been effective to our hurt. The prospect of imprisonment in such circumstances is no deterrent, and the Indian malcontent feels that he has but little to fear from the once dreaded Raj. We are engaged in manufacturing martyrs on a large scale; with every feeble gesture of repression we increase the Indian's dislike of us without creating any respect for our determination. We have become reconciled to being hated in India; must we endure to find ourselves despised?

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Let it not be supposed that even in these little short of desperate circumstances I would advocate the policy of the "iron hand". The days when Britain, or any other nation, could rule by the power of the sword alone are—happily—over. The world would not suffer British oppression of India, even if our own consciences would allow it, and our most apparent weaknesses have cost us less than our occasional bursts of maniac fury. That we must rule India with firmness is and must be obvious to all who have any acquaintance with the tasks confronting us and with the mentality of the peoples of the country. But firmness need not imply harshness; still less need it lend colour to the accusations of brutality which Indian malcontents are always ready to level against the administration. There have been instances—familiar to every student of Indian history—when English officials have treated the Indian public in a manner it is not pleasant to recall.

The issue before Britain is in essence a simple one. It is to be found in the challenge so often flung at us by Indian politicians—govern or get out. As there are insuperable objections to our getting out at the present juncture, we must govern. And we must govern without weakness, without the weakness that evinces itself in truckling to sedition-mongers or that far more contemptible weakness that is revealed in the barbarous use of force against helpless and unarmed mobs. If in governing we find we are hope-



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lessly hindered by conflicting pledges, then those pledges must be scrapped, as ruthlessly as all nations have scrapped pledges in the past when the conditions of their fulfilment became impossible or unendurable. England once prided herself on her genius for colonial administration. Are we to believe that that genius is a thing of the past?

## CHAPTER XV

### CONFLICTING ELEMENTS

IN an earlier chapter we have dealt with the diverse nature of the population of India, and have specified some of the many differing races and communities that make up the heterogeneous collection we call the people of the country. Between each and every section there is incompatibility, even some measure of ill-feeling and hostility. In no case, however, is this hostility so marked, so unvarying, and so dangerous as between the two main communities, Hindu and Mohammedan. To find a cure for this deep-seated hostility—and without its cure no peaceful future for India can be envisaged—it is necessary to consider what are the real underlying causes of the mutual antipathy of the Hindu and the Mohammedan.

Lord Irwin rightly described Hindu-Mohammedan antagonism as “the dominant issue in Indian life”. In the last ten years something like five hundred lives have been lost and ten times as many persons have been injured in communal riots, and every Province except Madras has been affected. For the minority community is not concentrated in one part of India, as the Protestants in Ireland are more or less concentrated in Ulster. In

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some Provinces—notably in the Punjab—the Mohammedans are in the majority, and they have settled practically all over India except in the extreme South. They are sufficiently numerous to exercise a considerable influence by weight of their numbers alone,\* and their physical vigour and martial prowess make them more formidable than their numbers would imply. Neither community is able to exterminate the other or willing to assimilate with the other; and without some satisfactory solution to Hindu-Mohammedan antipathy no form of self-government for India is feasible.

There are three root causes of the deep mutual dislike that prevails between Hindus and Mohammedans—religious, racial and political. In regard to the first of these, I must again point out that religious differences in India are far more than mere matters of ritual and dogma. Eastern religions are for the most part strictly utilitarian; they are not merely systems of philosophy or metaphysics, they are also practical guides to daily life, they inculcate not only a mental and spiritual attitude towards the phenomena of existence and a theory of the first cause of those phenomena, but they also lay down a rigid code of rules for the conduct of their adherents. Unfortunately the whole spirit and practice of Hinduism and the Islamic faith are basically opposed to each other. They are widely

\*According to the 1921 Census, out of a population of 318,942,000, Hindus accounted for 216,735,000 and Mohammedans for 68,735,000.

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differing religions, designed to fit the spiritual needs of widely differing peoples. To the Hindu the metaphysic of Islam is arid and materialistic; to the Muslim the rich polytheism of the Hindu is idolatry of the most debased kind. This would not be of so much consequence if the two religions were merely matters of creeds and of formulas; it is the practices that they require, practices that are incompatible with each other, that are the constant cause of hostility and that frequently lead to bloody affrays.

To the Hindu the sacredness of the cow is one of the most essential tenets of religion. To the Mohammedan the cow is no more and no less than any other animal; and he selects cows for sacrifice at the festival of *Bakr-Id*. In choosing the cow for slaughter rather than any other animal he is, of course, mainly actuated by the desire to distress the Hindu. At the hour appointed by the Mohammedans for prayer Hindu religious processions make a point of passing before the mosques with full musical accompaniment—their intention being simply and solely to annoy Mohammedan worshippers. These practices—childish though they may seem—are constant causes of friction. A less frequent though more serious cause lies in the fact that the religious anniversaries observed by Muslims are fixed by reference to a lunar year which does not correspond with the adjusted Hindu calendar, and consequently it occasionally happens that dates of special importance in the two religions coincide—as, for instance, when an anniversary of Muslim

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mourning synchronises with a day of Hindu rejoicing. When this occurs troops have to be stationed in every centre with a considerable mixed population, and the hospitals are warned to be ready for an influx of patients.

The religious differences between Hindus and Mohammedans, deep-seated though they are, would not lead to so serious an antagonism were it not that the adherents of each religion deliberately and of set purpose wound the susceptibilities of those who follow the other faith. The difficulty could be overcome by mutual tolerance, but no such tolerance exists. Between such incompatible temperaments it is perhaps hardly to be hoped for. Racial differences help to reinforce religious antipathies.

Islam has been described as the religion of the soldier, and the Mussulman is the typical soldier. He is perhaps the most formidable fighting man the world has known; he has proved his worth in Europe, and for centuries the united chivalry of the West was unable to drive him from the Holy Land. In India, too, the Mussulman's record is that of a conqueror. Though relatively weak in numbers, he seized the land of Hindustan and scattered his Hindu foes like chaff before the wind. Under the Moghuls he established in India one of the mightiest empires that have been known, and only after that empire had disintegrated, had split up into fragments that could be individually attacked and destroyed, did he know even partial defeat. The Mussulman in India to-day is proud of his military

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tradition and contemptuous of the non-martial and physically inferior Hindu. Although the Hindus outnumber the Mohammedans by three to one, every Mohammedan believes—and I would not like to say he is wrong—that even to-day the followers of Islam would, if it came to armed conflict, slaughter the Hindu majority with as little trouble as they now slaughter the sacred cow.

The Hindu, on the other hand, despises the Mohammedan as an invading barbarian, as devoid of culture as of acuteness of intellect. Here the Hindu is not without some measure of justification, for the Mohammedan can no more compete with the Hindu when brains are the weapons employed than the Hindu can resist the Mohammedan on the field of battle. The Mohammedan tends to be a simple, forthright, rather dull sort of fellow; the Brahman Pandit has a mind as sharp as a knife and as full of twists as a labyrinth. In the Council Chamber, in public speaking and writing, above all in lobbying and all that requires subtlety and intrigue, the Mohammedan is as a child to the Hindu.

Religious and racial differences alone might well account for Hindu-Mohammedan antagonism; yet neither of these reasons is as potent in causing hostility as the desire for political supremacy. The Report of the Indian Statutory Commission rightly observes that “the true cause (of Hindu-Muslim tension), as it seems to us, is the struggle for political power and for the opportunities which political power confers”. The Mohammedans know very well

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that, educationally backward as they are and outnumbered by their Hindu enemies, they stand but little chance of effective representation in any democratically elected legislative body. They are therefore desperately anxious that in the administration of the country as it is being carried on at present, and above all in whatever form of autonomous government the future may bring to India, they shall have adequate representation and what they consider to be their fair share of official posts. The Hindu community, on the other hand, not unnaturally lays claim to the rights of a majority, and relies also on its qualifications of better education and greater wealth.

One great trouble is that the administration of India to-day is conducted to so large an extent on communal lines. But while we may regret this fact it is difficult to see how it could have been avoided. The position at present is that the Muslim voters form a separate electoral roll and choose their own members, while the non-Mohammedan electors are grouped in distinct constituencies and elect their own representatives. It is contended that this separation reduces the chances of conflict, as the rival communities are not fighting against each other for the same seats. On the other hand, however, it seems undeniable that such an arrangement tends to encourage the appeal to communal sentiment instead of developing political associations along the lines of that broader nationalism which Indians of the better type desire to see.

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The question of separate electorates has always been a point at issue between Hindus and Mohammedans. Mr. Gandhi is, I believe, opposed to them; he has laid it down (in a pamphlet on "Hindu-Muslim Tension") that "distribution of posts should never be according to the proportion of the numbers of each community"; but on this point Mohammedan opinion is for the most part against him. It was not until the Morley-Minto Reforms were embodied in the Indian Councils Act of 1909 that the principle of separate representation for Mohammedans was first adopted. In 1906 a Mohammedan deputation headed by the Aga Khan waited upon the then Viceroy (Lord Minto) and put forward a claim for communal representation in the event of the principle of election being accepted. The deputation based its claim on the grounds that the Mohammedans amounted to between a fifth and a quarter of the population of India, that their importance was shown by the fact that their numbers were greater than the population of any first-class European State except Russia, and that their political importance and their contribution to Imperial defence entitled them to a larger representation than one estimated on numbers alone. They asked therefore that they should have communal representation, based on these principles, on the district and municipal boards, that in the Legislative Council the number of Mohammedan representatives should not depend on the numerical strength of the community, and that they should



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never be in an ineffective minority. Lord Minto's reply to the deputation was favourable, and the Mohammedan request was granted—much to the disgust of the Hindus, who considered that they were being unfairly treated.

At first glance one is tempted to sympathise with the Hindu point of view and to agree that the present arrangement is incompatible with the ideals of democracy. It must be remembered, however, that were elections carried on in the normal democratic manner there would be no Mohammedan representatives at all, except for those very few districts where there is a Muslim majority. Also, the objection of the Hindus is not an objection to separate electorates as such; it is merely an expression of their desire to whittle down Mohammedan representation as much as possible and to acquire additional seats on the Legislatures for Hindus. The proportion in which such seats are to be divided must be a matter for negotiation between the two communities and the Raj. To the principle of separate electorates, however undesirable it may be in the ultimate, there seems to be, in the present state of communal feeling, no practicable alternative.

A close parallel to the Hindu-Muslim situation in India is to be found in the antagonism that persists between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Here also we find two communities differing widely (though less widely than Mohammedans and Hindus) in religion and, to some extent, in race.

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Here too we find a deep-seated hostility which is "rationalised" as the expression of religious incompatibility but is really, as every unprejudiced observer recognises, due to the struggle for political power. The Jews claim recognition of their superior education and the wealth they have brought to the country; the Mohammedan Arabs demand consideration on the ground of their military services during the war and the promises made to them as a consequence of those services—promises that are hardly compatible with similar pledges that we have, with our accustomed recklessness, made to Jews. The parallel with the Indian situation, though not so much with the respective peoples concerned, is, it must be admitted, striking.

The problem of religion in Palestine is less difficult than in India, because the differences between Judaism and Islam are less fundamental than those between Islam and Hinduism. There is, in fact, no reason whatever why the adherents of the two faiths should not be able, as far as their religious observances are concerned, to live in amity. In fact there have been in Palestine in recent years no purely religious riots of any consequence; one or two heads have been broken at the Wailing Wall, but the trouble—even if we admit it to be religious in origin—has been no more than could be dealt with adequately by a small posse of police. When trouble on any large scale breaks out in Palestine, as it did in 1929, it becomes at once evident that the disturbances are due to political

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and not to religious causes, that they result from the fears of Jews and Arabs that the preponderance of power in the country may go to the hostile community. The point was put very clearly by the Palestine Arab Executive which, after the disorders of 1929, presented an address to the then High Commissioner (Sir John Chancellor) claiming that the outbreak resulted from "the British Zionist policy which aims at annihilating the Arab nation in favour of reviving a non-existent Jewish nation". Substitute for "Zionist" the word "Swarajist"; for "Arab", "Mohammedan"; and for "Jewish", "Hindu", and you have a reasonable approximation to the Muslim claim in India to-day. In the Palestine Arab manifesto there was no mention of the Wailing Wall; between Hindus and Muslims, when, if ever, they finally come to an agreement, there will be no need to discuss cow-slaughter and music before mosques. If once we can dismiss from the minds of each community the fear of political domination by the other we can safely leave religious differences to take care of themselves.

Even as far as their political ambitions are concerned, Hindus and Mohammedans can meet, to some extent, on a common platform. Both desire an extension of autonomous government in India, both visualise, either in the near or the distant future, a self-governing or an independent India. The overwhelming majority of Hindus and a large majority of Mohammedans are Swarajists; the reason why the Mohammedans are less unanimous

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in this respect is not out of love for the British but because they fear that should the British Raj cease to function they may find themselves under the dominance of a Brahman oligarchy. If ever Hindus and Mohammedans can overcome their mutual distrust and arrive at a working agreement with each other, we shall find a united India demanding the removal of British domination. We are not at present willing to abandon control of India, nor, indeed, is it feasible for us to do so. It therefore follows that from our point of view Hindu-Muslim hostility is for the time being not an unmixed evil. This fact has led to the suspicion—a suspicion which I believe to be wholly unfounded—that we ourselves foster Hindu-Muslim antipathy, in pursuance of the bad old policy of *divide et impere*.

Although the *Swaraj* movement provides a common platform on which Hindus and Mohammedans can meet and work together, paradoxically enough the movement has probably tended to exacerbate rather than to relieve the tension between the two communities. So long as authority was firmly established in British hands and self-government was not thought of, Hindu-Muslim rivalry was confined within a narrower field, and there was little for the members of one community to fear from the predominance of the other. The comparative absence of communal strife in the Indian States to-day may be similarly explained.\* Even in British India communal tension was far less acute

\*Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, 1930.

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a generation ago than now, and riotous outbreaks were comparatively unknown. The coming of the Reforms and the anticipation of what may follow them have, as the Simon Report points out, given new point to Hindu-Muslim competition.

The difficulty is that both Hindus and Mohammedans, while desiring emancipation from the British rule, distrust each other far more than they distrust the British. They resent an alien domination, but they feel that the domination, if only because it is alien, is likely to be impartial. With an all-India Constitution, whether federal or based on any other plan, both Hindus and Mohammedans fear lest an undue share of power should fall to the other community; the Mohammedans are apprehensive lest they be outvoted and out-manceuvred by their cleverer and more numerous rivals, and the Hindus, despite their numerical superiority, dread an appeal to arms if the British should withdraw. Both communities desire *Swaraj*; both fear the consequences of *Swaraj* to themselves. And both know in their own hearts that so long as Hindu-Muslim antipathy continues unabated *Swaraj* is an empty dream, or—worse still—would prove the signal for one of the bloodiest massacres of history.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE OTHER INDIA

OUR study of affairs in India, as far as we have hitherto been able to take it, has been confined for the most part to British India. There is another India, the India of the States, in which conditions are by no means identical.

The Indian States comprise more than a third of the area of the Sub-continent (700,000 square miles) and have eighty million inhabitants. They are scattered all over the map of India, so that every railway of any length is bound to pass through the territories of several States. There are nearly six hundred States, varying in size from little plots of a few acres to such vast territories as Hyderabad, which has an area of 82,700 square miles and a population of twelve and a half millions—in other words, it is nearly as large as Great Britain and has almost twice the number of inhabitants of Portugal or Austria. Mysore, in the South, has six millions of inhabitants, with an area of just under 30,000 square miles, so that it is larger than the Irish Free State and twice as populous. The States are not British territory and their inhabitants are not British subjects.

Conditions of life in the States, as well as their

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internal governments, differ widely. Some of them have attained a relatively high degree of administrative efficiency; others are backward in the extreme. All are almost absolute monarchies, and none of them has achieved even that degree of democratic government that prevails in British India to-day. The Princes wield enormous powers in their territories, the only real limitation being that they are prohibited from declaring war or making alliances. They have powers of life and death over their subjects, and in many of the smaller States the ruler himself constitutes the sole judiciary.

In nearly all cases these powers are derived directly from treaties, agreements or *Sanads* with the Paramount Power. In the days of the East India Company many treaties were made by the agents of the Company with various Indian rulers, and when the Crown took over entirely the administration of the country after the Mutiny, it was agreed (perhaps unwisely) that Britain should be bound by all such treaties into which the Company had entered. In Queen Victoria's famous proclamation of 1858 there appears the clause:—

“We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India that all treaties or engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honourable the East India Company are by us accepted and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part.”

This pronouncement has been described as the

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Magna Charta of the Princes, who contend that it places them on the footing of allies with the Crown, and that their mutual obligations are contractual and reciprocal and cannot be varied without the consent of both parties. In effect, of course, the Princes are subordinate to the Crown, as they are subordinate in practice if not in theory to the Government of India. In the event of gross misgovernment in any of the States Britain reserves the right to intervene, and has on several occasions so intervened. We have appointed Regents during a minority period, we have interfered with normal succession, we have taken punitive action in the direction of fining a ruler or reducing the number of guns to which he is entitled in salute, we have deposed rulers and we have annexed States. Recently the Princes have expressed a desire for a clear ruling as to what their position *vis-à-vis* the Crown and the Government of India really is, and to furnish an answer to the question the Butler Committee was appointed in 1927.

Sir Leslie Scott and a number of other eminent Counsel were briefed by the Princes to investigate the matter and to lay their case before the Butler Committee. They (Sir Leslie and his colleagues) came to the conclusion that the relationship that exists between the Princes as heads of their States and the British Crown cannot by any Constitutional means be delegated to any Government of British India which may at some future time be responsible to a British Indian popular assembly, that the



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relationship is wholly a contractual one, and that each of the major Indian Princes is a sovereign except in so far as he has explicitly or implicitly alienated that sovereignty to the British Crown. Paramountcy, they held, implied only the surrender of all foreign relations to the Crown in consideration of an undertaking to protect them from aggression at home and abroad. The Princes' Counsel agreed, however, that the Crown had an implicit right to intervene to prevent serious misrule; although they did not specify the extent to which such intervention was allowable—whether it should be restricted to a mild reprimand, whether it should extend to deposition or annexation, or where, between these two extremes, the limit should be fixed. The Butler Committee did not accept Sir Leslie Scott's views *in toto*; it agreed that the treaties of the States are with the Crown and that their fulfilment cannot be delegated to any responsible Indian Government, but it did not accept the proposition that the rights of the Paramount Power are exclusively derived from agreement. The Butler Committee was responsible for producing the very striking phrase, "Paramountcy must remain paramount." It will probably be necessary to appoint another committee of experts to elucidate the meaning of that cryptic observation.

There is, of course, not the slightest chance of the Crown surrendering any of the rights it has acquired—whether by treaty, by usage or by simple aggression—over the Indian States. Nor,

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indeed, is it feasible for us by so doing to perpetuate an administrative archaism. The Indian States to-day, with one or two honourable exceptions, are shamefully misgoverned; their people are groaning under a tyranny almost beyond the conception of the Western mind. The Indian Prince, as a rule, is a despot whose like can hardly be found outside the pages of the *Arabian Nights*. Even Indian Nationalists, anxious as they are to prove India's capacity for self-government, can find no word to say in favour of the administration that prevails in the States. In *India; Peace or War?* C. S. Ranga Iyer, an Indian Nationalist and a member of the Legislative Assembly, admits that "the administration of the Indian States is appallingly crude and indisputably corrupt"; while in *Princes and India: the Truth* the authors (B. C. Singh and S. Goswami) say that "the States' subjects are tyrannised and terrorised and taxed beyond human endurance, and with no machinery for redress". Nor are these statements exaggerated. What else can be expected when (as the two last-named authors observe) "the tenure and stability of the public services is dependent on the mood and temper of the prince; court intrigues by ambitious ministers and palace favourites occur every day and often culminate in shocking scandals some of which have even won world-wide notoriety and historical censure".

Frequently the personal character of the Prince is not above reproach. Inheriting vast revenues,

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which they disburse at their own sweet will, the Princes tend to be grossly, even grotesquely, extravagant;\* I know of one ruler who spent over £20,000 to entertain the Viceroy for three days; and I have seen the budget of one of the Princes in which the amount allotted for education throughout the State was only one-tenth of the sum appropriated for the *upkeep* of His Highness's cars! There is one State in which, I am credibly informed, cattle were not allowed to graze until after nightfall because the ungainly aspect of the beasts jarred on the Maharajah's susceptibilities.

But it is useless to proceed with a list of the eccentricities (to use no harsher word) of some of the Indian Princes. For one thing, they are known to all who have lived in India; for another, they are in many cases too revolting to bear description. And as the Princes control a large body of propagandists, including several Europeans, to put forward their views and to whitewash their characters, any such recital would lead only to an undignified squabble and an orgy of mud-slinging. Those who seek for information will find it in the proceedings of the Indian States' Peoples' Conference, which meets annually to ventilate the grievances of the inhabitants of the States.

The Princes are to-day, for reasons with which I shall deal subsequently, more than a little appre-

\*In *India in Revolt* Maj.-Gen. J. F. C. Fuller tells the story of a well-known Maharajah who, during the Viceroyalty of Curzon, spent three lakhs of rupees (£20,000) on the ceremonies in connection with the "marriage" of two pet pigeons.

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hensive as to their position. It is for this reason that they are concerning themselves so much with propaganda, and that they are so extremely nervous of any counter-propaganda in British India. To guard against attacks on the Princes the Governor-General in 1922 certified the Princes' Protection Act, providing for heavy penalties against those who libel the native Indian rulers. The Act, however, apart from being highly unpopular in British India, has been almost wholly ineffective. What the Princes want is not so much provision for the punishment of those who disseminate propaganda against them as the means of muzzling such propaganda. For this, of course, no legal instrument can well provide; and as a result some of the Princes disburse large sums in blackmail. Many a third-rate Indian journalist makes a comfortable living in this way. He starts a wretched little vernacular paper and writes to some well-to-do Prince whose character is not irreproachable to say that he proposes to publish a long article on administration in His Highness's State. In preparing the article, however, he has come across one or two curious anomalies that might, superficially, bear the appearance of misgovernment, though of course there must be some other explanation for them. Would His Highness be good enough to provide that explanation? His Highness sends along an "explanation" (*anglicè*, cash payment), and of course the article never appears. The wily editor waits a week or two and then approaches another

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ruler who is likely to visualise without enthusiasm a detailed description of his régime. And so the game goes merrily on. The law cannot touch the enterprising journalist, for the law never gets to hear of his activities. I knew one such rogue in Delhi—a fat, genial rascal with every vice except that of hypocrisy. He did very well at his nefarious trade, but was in constant dread of assassination. In India one may evade the law, but there are other methods of retribution.

The Indian Princes have fallen very far from the high estate they once occupied. They are still ruling monarchs in name; they are still permitted (within the somewhat elastic limits imposed by the Indian Political Department) to live in royal state, to waste their magnificent incomes in ridiculous extravagance, to play polo, hold Durbars, and oppress their subjects up to a point. But in the majority of States there is a British Resident, who acts, be it understood, purely in an advisory capacity—but Heaven help any Prince who fails to take his advice. The Resident dispenses with the glamour and the glitter of pseudo-royalty; he is content to be the real ruler of the State. Nevertheless, his office is no bed of roses. His duties must be discharged with the utmost tact and discretion. He must not interfere more than necessary with the privileges and the prerogatives of the princeling under his control; he must allow him his fair share of the limelight and the unfettered satisfaction of his sometimes rather peculiar sexual pleasures.

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The Prince must accept the Resident's advice and must do what the Government of India, through the Political Department, tells him. Apart from that he can please himself; he can be as idle, as extravagant, as corrupt and as vicious as he likes. Nobody will blame him, unless he is so foolish as to intrigue against the Raj. If he does that he is for trouble. But it will not be for intriguing against the Raj that he will be kicked off the *Gadi*, it will be for the hundred-and-one trivial offences—the murders and rapes he has committed for years past without protest from anybody. The Political Department has a *dossier* for every Prince, very fully documented with the reports of the various spies who are sent round the States. When a Prince shows signs of becoming troublesome it is not difficult, by turning up the private record of his activities, to discover plenty of good reasons, other than the true one, why he is unfit to rule. Let him be loyal to the Raj, and these unpleasant secrets will never see the light of day. Let him show signs of disaffection, and he will find that not one case of rape, murder or extortion has been overlooked. The authorities will be generously indignant at this sudden revelation of his infamy.

Being themselves, for the most part, despots, the Princes can understand and appreciate the despotic manner in which their allegiance to the Government of India is enforced; it is the typical Eastern method. Nor is their thralldom particularly galling; it allows them opportunity for all the indulgences

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and relaxations they desire. They may groan under Britain's yoke; they may claim, as they do, that in many respects—in particular in regard to customs, harbour duties, the salt monopoly, and one or two other matters—they are unfairly treated. But they have seen the cloud no bigger than a man's hand that may bring forth *Swaraj*, and they are bitterly afraid. The British may have chastised them with whips; will not the British Indian politicians chastise them with scorpions? At present, despite the disaffection of the States's subjects, Britain, to preserve order and to honour her treaties, keeps the Princes on their thrones. If British troops are ever withdrawn from the country, it is at least doubtful whether any Indian administration will have either the desire or the power to keep them there. The Princes are loyal to the British connection—wisely so, for without the British connection there might be no Princes.

Yet some form of self-government they know must come, and equally surely it must apply to the whole of India. The Princes, therefore, find themselves in a dilemma. They cannot put the clock back; they cannot, even if they would, ensure that India shall always be directly governed from Whitehall. If they desire to preserve their rights and privileges, if they are going to put up a fight for mere existence, they can do so only by making terms with British India, and by making those terms now, while they still have something to offer. They have induced British agreement with their view

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that their relations with His Majesty's Government cannot without their consent be transferred to any Indian Government that may in the future come into being. If and when such an eventuality arises, their consent, they well know, will have to be given—otherwise they will simply cease to exist. But the necessity for that formal consent gives them something to bargain with—and the Eastern love of bargaining is not confined to the bazar.

The Princes have been acute enough to grasp this point and to act upon it. While maintaining their loyalty to the Crown and insisting on the preservation of the British connection (thus keeping on good terms with the Political Department), they have yet affirmed their sympathy with British-Indian claims for self-government. They sent a deputation to the Round Table Conference, and by a brilliant stroke of policy ran away with the whole Conference by being the first to come forward with a scheme for an All-India Federation. The Princes, the autocrats, the tyrants, the absolute rulers—these are the people who have sponsored a scheme for an autonomous India, who have stolen the thunder of Mr. Gandhi and his friends! One must admit that those who advise the Princes in their policy have well earned the very handsome salaries they are paid.

At the same time, while sympathising with India's aspirations towards *Swaraj*, the Princes are anxious for a reaffirmation of our pledges guaranteeing the integrity of their States. They are anxious for this because they know that here they have us in



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a cleft stick. Our promises to the Princes are so vague and so indefinite that even a committee of experts has been unable to decide exactly what they mean; all that is certain is that they have been broken dozens of times and that they will be and must be broken again—misgovernment by the Princes themselves necessitates interference. But however much or however little our promises to the Princes may convey, it is beyond question that they are incompatible with our promises to British India. If our pledge to encourage the development of self-governing institutions in India means anything at all, it must mean that such institutions shall be created on an all-India basis; none but an unpractical visionary could propose the establishment of *Swaraj* in British India with the simultaneous existence in the rest of India of Principalities owing direct allegiance to the British Crown and having direct relations with Whitehall. No Constitution, Federal or otherwise, will get over the difficulty that Dominion Status, or whatever form of self-government India achieves, must necessarily apply to the whole country. Our pledges to British India and to the States respectively were made when the position was less clearly understood than it is to-day. Whatever may be the feasibility of their individual fulfilment, it is clear that they are mutually exclusive. The pledges—or some of them—will be broken whether we like it or not; they will be broken because they are not capable of being kept. The sooner we realise that fact the sooner we shall be

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able to settle down to a study of the hard realities of the Indian situation.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FUTURE

INDIA has been described as the poorest country in the world, and as the richest. Neither description is inaccurate. She is potentially rich, though miserably poor in fact. She has untold mineral wealth and enormous agricultural possibilities; she could be predominant in the production of cotton, jute, tea, sugar, petroleum, coal and steel. And yet she is to-day so backward that she lacks most of the amenities of a civilised country and so poor that her wretched inhabitants can hardly pay the taxes that provide for even those few amenities. The resources of the country are unexploited, just as the abilities of the people are wasted. Every man who has lived and worked in India knows this; every such man will shrug his shoulders and tell you there is nothing to be done, that there is no way of translating India's potential riches into actual wealth. Yet greater miracles than this have been accomplished before; and as far as India's future prosperity is concerned I believe that where there's a will there's a way.

There is no panacea for India's ills; I can offer no cure-all, no patent medicine that will change the face of the country to smiling plenitude. If the reader

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has gathered anything at all from this book he must have gathered that the problem—or rather the collection of problems—which India presents is extraordinarily intricate, that most of the difficulties that confront the administrator are capable not so much of solution as of alleviation. We cannot, even if we would, reform at one fell swoop all that we regard as undesirable in the Indian social organism; we cannot by a stroke of the pen bring into being an efficient autonomous Indian Legislature. What progress we are able to make must be made slowly and surely; each step must be carefully considered before it is taken, and must be consolidated before we pass on to the next step. All we can usefully do is to decide on the direction in which our progress is to be made, to settle the broad outlines of our future policy in India.

The British task in India has been no sinecure in the past; it will be even less of a sinecure in the future. For India has been well named the Land of Regrets; the history of its inhabitants, and to no less an extent the record of our own administration, provides ample material for regret on the part of all concerned. It is a sad history—a history of bloodshed and treachery, of oppression and anarchy, of misunderstanding and ill-will. It is useless for us to accuse the Indian of ingratitude for the benefits we have conferred on the country; it is useless for the Indian to charge us with lack of good faith inasmuch as he has not achieved the measure of autonomy he desired and expected. It will not help either party

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if the Land of Regrets acquires the new name of the Land of Recriminations.

Recrimination is too easy, albeit unprofitable, a game to play, particularly where neither party's hands are scrupulously clean. I have tried in this book to play the thankless role of "candid friend"; I have not concealed what I believe to be the essential weaknesses of the Indian character and the drawbacks of the Indian social organisation. Nor have I attempted to hide what I consider to be the many errors and the few malpractices that have marked the British administration. Probably, therefore, this book will be popular with neither party. But it seems to me that the days when pro-British or pro-Indian propaganda was of value are over—if there ever were such days. It may be pleasing to our vanity to consider ourselves supermen, nobly and disinterestedly guiding the destinies of a mob of ungrateful savages. It may be soothing to the disgruntled Congress-man to read that enlightened India is being ground down and oppressed by grasping and greedy Englishmen. Such statements are neither true nor helpful. They tend to make ill-feeling worse, to render still more remote the day when Indians and English will unite to build up a free, happy and prosperous India, bound by ties of gratitude and of mutual advantage to the Empire. Unless all is to revert to anarchy and ruin, that day must come. Propaganda praising one party at the expense of the other can only tend to retard it.

There are two main problems in India to-day, of

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equal importance though not of equal urgency. One is the devising of a suitable form of self-government for an enormous population of heterogeneous and mutually antipathetic races. The other and more immediate problem is to discover how, before that self-governing Indian Legislature can function or even come into being, the administration of the country is to be carried on.

That is the immediate problem—the problem of how to maintain in India to-day that measure of control that is necessary for the preservation of internal peace and normal commercial activities. And its solution is by no means as simple as might appear. We have tried the policy of conciliation and it has failed. Must we therefore revert to the policy of the “iron hand”?

I do not think that we can or should. We are—let us not blink the fact—hated in India to-day. If we impose our will, as we can, by a system of wholesale repression, executions and imprisonments, that smouldering hatred will flare up into something one hardly likes to contemplate. I firmly believe that another Mutiny in India—though I hope and believe it to be unlikely—is no impossibility. I do not doubt our ability to put down such a rising if it did occur; Indians have not the qualities required for military leadership, and a Mutiny would not stand the faintest chance of success. But it would put the clock back a hundred years; it would destroy all the work that has been accomplished in the last half-century, it would mean India's lapse into barbarism,

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loss of life, loss of trade, and the heaviest blow the Empire's prestige has suffered perhaps throughout its history. It is a disaster that must be avoided at all costs.

Another possibility, more remote though hardly less serious in its practical consequences, is the successful organisation by India of passive resistance. The Non-Co-operation Movement of 1921, abortive though it was, proved conclusively that against such a campaign, waged on a nation-wide basis and with unremitting determination, we have no defence. An India united in the Non-Co-operation Movement can paralyse the administration of the country far more easily and far more effectively than by even a successful recourse to arms. In 1921 Mr. Gandhi found that India was not yet ready for Non-Co-operation; she is still not ready. But in the course of time she will become ready; and unless something has by then been accomplished to ease the situation, we shall see the end of British dominion in India. And this, at the present juncture, would be no less a disaster to India than to Britain. For India, despite her continual demands for freedom, is not yet able to stand on her own legs. The severance of the British connection would mean for Britain loss of wealth and of prestige; it would mean for India internecine warfare, the destruction of civilisation and a lapse into prehistoric barbarism.

This is indeed a dismal picture; yet one hardly sees what else can result from a continuance of the present weak-kneed administration. We have told

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India that we are merely temporary incumbents of office, that we hold the reins only until Indian politicians are ready to relieve us of them, that we welcome even now Indian participation in the government of the country. Indians reply that they *are* ready to relieve us of those responsibilities, and point to the fact that their so-called participation in the government is the sorriest of farces, that they are allowed to share in the proceedings of the debating society at New Delhi, but that of real power they have not a vestige. And they are right. Membership of the Legislative Assembly is an insult to any serious Indian politician; and if Indians are to decide when the country is ready for self-government, then there is no reason for the continued presence of the British.

Here again we are hampered by the vague, incompatible and sometimes incomprehensible pledges we have given to India in the past. We are told that we are "in honour bound" to take half-a-dozen different and mutually exclusive courses of action in India. It is high time that we laid down definitely, not a complete and comprehensive programme of India's future development, but at least a statement of our present attitude and of the broad principles we propose to follow. We must tell India frankly that the pledges we have given to her or to any other nation or people do not stand irrevocably and unalterably for all time; that they were made in good faith and that our intention was to abide by their terms, but that when the fulfilment



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of a pledge or pledges becomes impossible or the conditions of that fulfilment must clearly lead to disaster, then those pledges must be broken. There is nothing new in this; it has been recognised in international diplomacy ever since diplomacy has existed. A pledge between two peoples is no more inviolable than a contract between two private individuals; it may and should be broken if circumstances make its fulfilment disastrous, dishonourable or unbearably harsh.

India must be made to understand that the granting of self-government can come only by the most gradual of stages, and that complete autonomy cannot now be envisaged at any particular date. India must understand also that the granting of self-government is not a contractual obligation, that it will be conferred, when it is conferred, by the British Parliament, which is the sole authority having the right and the power to do so. Organisations representing Indian opinion may make representations, Round Table Conferences may meet and confer, and Mr. Gandhi may fast unto death or spin his *Charka*; but the ultimate decision rests with the British Government alone and with no other body. Many Indians fail to understand this, and think that the choice between Dominion Status and Independence is one that can be made by negotiation between representatives of the Congress and the Viceroy. They must be disillusioned on this point.

It is here that I find what seems to me to be the one ray of light that illumines the storm clouds over

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India. The Congress leaders, with the exception of one or two total irreconcilables who are blind to all gestures of good-will, are not unreasonable in essentials. They resent British domination, and they think—not without some justification—that they have been unfairly treated. But they know as well as we do that self-government for India must come as a gift from Great Britain and that they cannot—at any rate not without untold suffering to themselves and to their fellow-countrymen—force its grant from an unwilling Government. If they persist in their intransigent attitude it will be because the bankruptcy of our diplomacy and statesmanship has forced them into such a course. We can and we must convince Indian politicians that the pace at which self-government can be attained depends on themselves and on the measure of useful co-operation with the Raj as it is at present that they are willing and able to give. And we must make it clear that, whatever they may do or refuse to do, the government will be carried on. It will be carried on with the minimum of force, the minimum of repression; we will no longer point with imbecile gratification to the vast numbers of Indians we have imprisoned because they have assimilated too thoroughly the English ideal of freedom. But the measure of force and of repression that must be used is dependent on Indians themselves. Liberty is a great ideal; but in every civilised State it is an ideal that is held to be subordinate to good government.

It is not our firmness that has made us hated in

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India. Despite our "pledge" that we would in no case interfere with the religious customs of the inhabitants of the country, we have in more than one instance so interfered; we put down *Suttee* with an iron hand, and we declined to consider any possible religious sanction that might have been held to justify robbery and murder as practised by the Thugs. Yet not the most hostile of our Indian critics brings forward these things as instances of British tyranny. The Indian has in the past had to submit to the rule of so many invading races that his subordinate position galls him less than it might gall a European people. And the yoke of the British has certainly pressed less hardly on him than did that of the Moghuls, the Persians or the Mahrattas. But there is this great difference: to his other conquerors he submitted unconditionally—his country was the spoil of the victorious invader. With the British he has argued and negotiated from the beginning. When, less than a lifetime ago, the government of India passed under the British Crown we voluntarily took over all the engagements into which the servants of the East India Company, for a variety of reasons, had entered. We had hardly started our work of administration when we hastened to assure Indians that we were carrying out the task of government purely in their interests and that we were anxious to hand over the reins to them as soon as they expressed their willingness and their ability to take them. We allowed our generous impulses to lead us too far.

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Let us try to imagine what would happen if we were to leave India to-day. What would be the constitutional position of the States it is difficult to say. Their treaties and agreements are with the Crown; they would have no unity with and owe no allegiance to a self-governing British India, and every frontier would constitute the division between two alien and quite possibly hostile nations. Be it remembered, too, that the States are scattered all over India, and that their frontiers are not natural ones—they are artificially delimited. An army of monstrous size would be required to defend the thousands of miles of inland frontiers.

First, one must assume, a Legislature would have to be elected. Supposing that this could be achieved, and that anything like democratic representation is possible in a country in which ninety per cent. of the population is illiterate, and assuming furthermore that all the Mohammedans and Hindus did not cut each other's throats in the heat of the election campaign, India's new Parliament would have to proceed to the distribution of Ministerial offices. Since the Hindus are numerically preponderant, better educated and wealthier, presumably the large majority of the members of the Legislature would be of that community. But one can hardly doubt that the Mohammedans who had secured election would, as they always do, hotly demand a number of posts for members of their own faith. Here would be a deadlock: but one Minister at any rate would have to be appointed without delay.

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The need for a Minister for War would become very early apparent, for by this time the tribesmen from the North would have seized half the Punjab. The Legislature would appoint its most able debater to take charge of the army; but there can be little doubt that the army would now have taken charge of the Legislature.

I have no intention of poking fun at Indian politicians or of depreciating their abilities, which, in certain directions, are very considerable. But I challenge any man with any experience of Indian affairs to deny that some such comic-opera proceedings—followed, however, by a deluge of blood—would be the inevitable result of any abrogation by Britain, in present circumstances, of her plain duty in India. The perhaps unpalatable fact is that India is not ripe for self-government, that she will not be ripe for it for many years, and that she will never be ripe for it until her politicians are ready to learn in the school of local government the lessons that Britain is able and willing to teach them. I do not contend that Western democracy is the only or even the best form of government for the people of India. But I do say that efficient government of any description necessitates discipline and an understanding of the machinery of administration, and in these two departments Indians have much to learn.

The question of Hindu-Muslim hostility we have already considered; its cessation, or at any rate its abatement, is an indispensable preliminary to *Swaraj*. And, arising out of this difficulty, there is

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the further point that there is at present no approximation to a really national sentiment in India. The pseudo-nationalism that we find in the ranks of the Congress Party is almost purely sectarian. To the average Swarajist "India" means his own particular community or sect, sometimes it is even restricted to his own caste or sub-caste. To-day the patriotism of India is parochial.

There can be no question but that for the time being and for many years to come the British Raj must continue, and must continue without weakening. We must rule in India; we must rule, if need be, with force bare and unconcealed. But I cannot believe that that is the only alternative open to us. I cannot believe that it is impossible for Indians and Englishmen of good will to forget the past, to meet freely and frankly, to appreciate and make use of each other's good qualities, and to unite in helping to create the possibility of a free, prosperous and happy India, joined with Britain by ties of mutual appreciation and mutual benefit, each a source of strength to the other, each an equal and a useful partner in that great Empire that has been, is, and will be one of the most potent civilising forces of the world. I cannot believe that India will always bear its sad, bad old title, "Land of Regrets". If not we, then our children; if not they, then our children's children, will live to see the day when the brightest jewel in the British Crown shall be named the Land of Hope—a Hope that shall come to fruition in a glorious, prosperous and happy fulfilment.

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The whistle has blown, the gangway is up, and we have started, at long last, on the voyage home. We are in high spirits, for we are exiles who have received a remission of our sentence; in sixteen short days the White Cliffs of Dover will loom in the distance with the glad tidings that we are back again in our own country, with our own friends. And yet our pleasure is not unalloyed with a tinge of sorrow. Despite all the inconveniences, all the unpleasantnesses, the quarrels, the recriminations and the constant nerve-strain, we have grown to love that Land of Regrets in which we have lived and worked. This chapter in our lives has not been one of unalloyed bliss, and yet we hesitate to write "Finis" and turn the page.

The coast of Bombay begins to fade on the horizon, and our eyes are turned to the West. We are bound for home, and we are unfeignedly glad; yet we feel, and we shall always feel, a touch of nostalgia when we think of that sun-baked, arid land which we have grown to love, of that strange, exotic people, so alien and yet so akin to us, so intractable in peace yet so staunch to us in the war. We look back on our quarrels, and they seem no more than the friendly squabbles of the members of one family, who may jar on each other unbearably but who will yet stand shoulder to shoulder in the face of a common foe. Unbidden, the phrase, "Land of Regrets", rises to our lips; yet may we not already see the silver lining behind the dark clouds of distrust and discontent? May we not sense the

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vision, though we never live to see the actuality, of a happier day when the clouds shall have passed, and when Britain shall be united in bonds of free and honourable friendship with the Land of Hope?





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